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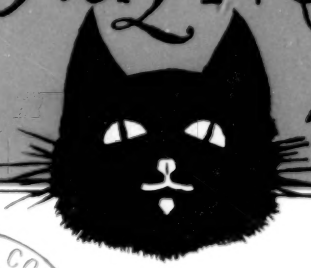
The Black Cat

A Short Story Magazine



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by

Florence Briney Reed

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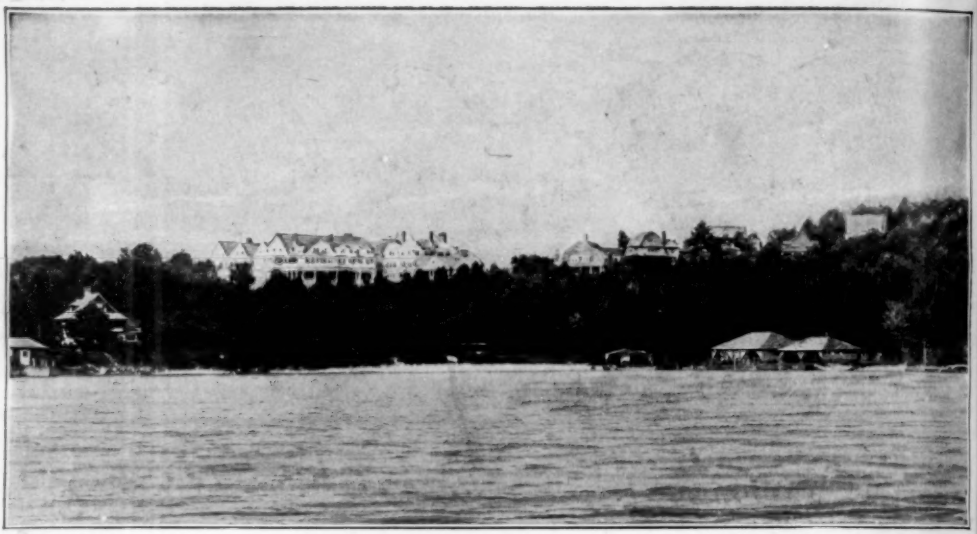

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The Black Cat

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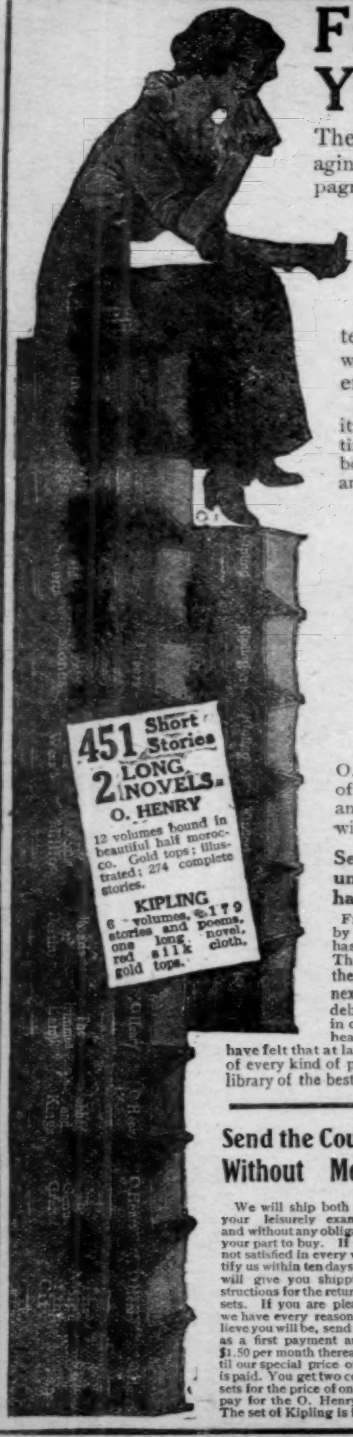
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The Bronze Hand

BY FLORENCE BRINEY REED

THE library of my Uncle Adrian was a curious room. It was, in fact, a building in itself and communicated with the rest of the great house by a passage-way whose narrow arched windows and dim hangings prepared one in a way for the unusual room to which it led. When I came as a small child to live at Uncle Adrian's, I thought that in all the world there couldn't be so delightful a place to explore and tarry in as this library. It was filled with treasures gathered from the four corners of the earth: rare pieces of sculpture rose white and graceful from their niches and pedestals; rich paintings hung on the walls along with faded tapestry; ugly gods and idols from far-away lands grinned out of corners; great vases of porcelain taller than I stood in their recesses; and rare and old books; some kept behind glass and locked cases, others lying carelessly upon the great table for anyone to see and read. I might write pages concerning my Uncle Adrian's treasures, and even then there would be many rare and unique treasures left unnoted. Of the one with which this story deals I shall be minute:

On a teakwood stand carved with strange figures, half men, half beasts, and with a lotus border of wonderful beauty, there always rested a bronze hand—a singular ornament—designed for what purpose no one could tell. Its obvious use was as a paper weight, and yet no artisan would devote such delicacy of design and perfection of work for so commonplace a purpose. The hand was that of a woman, delicately formed and beautiful; the forefinger extended and the others resting lightly on the tips. Every delicate bone and dimple was reproduced in the rosy bronze. It seemed almost a living hand, so realistic was it. Around the wrist of this bronze hand was a singular ornament—a bracelet of gold—a serpent formed of tiny golden scales—and holding between its outstretched jaws, a curious stone,—a dark stone almost opaque, but with glints of red and green light below the surface, like a flicker of flame behind a curtain of heavy smoke. Uncle Adrian thought it was a black opal. The bracelet seemed to be almost a part of the bronze so firmly was it fixed about the round wrist. I used to ask Uncle Adrian to take it off for me, but he'd shake his head and answer that it was not meant to be taken off.

Once I heard him talking to some friends about the Bronze Hand, and he said that it was a curious thing that the history of it could never be traced. They, I remember, did not agree at all about it. One called it Indian work; another Moorish; while a third laughed at their interest and said it was modern—cast in some ordinary place—for the fake curio dealer. And Uncle Adrian smiled and

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placed his hand lightly upon the bronze one and answered, "What it is, or whence it came, does not matter; it is mine now." He seemed ever to have a great fondness for the hand, and once Mother, coming in to consult him about some matter (rarely did she come into the library), found him before the fire with the bronze piece upon his knee and his fingers stroking it softly as if it had been a living hand. And Mother declared that the stone in the curious bracelet was glowing like a coal of fire. Afterwards she often jested with him about it, and he said gravely that until he found a living hand to mate with that, no woman's hand should rest in his, and so it seemed he would ever remain a solitaire.

I was but a small child when we came to Uncle Adrian's, my mother and I, and, in truth, he was not my uncle, but a distant cousin of father's, who, hearing of our destitution after my father's death had, for pity's sake, come for us and taken us to his home and set himself to straighten out, if possible, our tangled affairs. Since I could not call so grave and gray a man cousin, I addressed him ever as uncle, which title pleased him. I was a quiet, dreamy child, and being a cripple could not run and laugh as healthy children will, so I was permitted to stay in the library all I chose. The great, gloomy house, with its great oaks, hemlocks, and its quiet rooms, suited me and I was very happy there, though Mother often fretted at the quiet place, and mourned for gayer company than the gray men of science and letters who were our frequent guests.

The summer I was ten, there came to the village near us, a traveling circus, and mother, in great glee, prepared to go. I had no desire to mingle in the noisy crowds and breathe the dust and hear the chatter and music, so I begged her to let me remain at home, and grumblingly she consented. Uncle Adrian and I spent a happy afternoon in the library, each occupied in his own way, each silent and content. In an alcove not far from the great red lacquer cabinet (the cabinet which was a miniature temple and whose halls and rooms contained curious bits of cloisónne and ivory carvings) was the mummy case, and this I loved, though slightly afraid to linger near where the shadows were falling, when I was alone. But here, this afternoon, I sat in peace copying on my drawing pad the curious markings and symbols on the outer case, or playing with the scarabs and blue and green figurines which were kept in a cabinet near. I could hear the pages of Uncle's book turning slowly, and sometimes he would read aloud a passage in some unknown tongue.

It was late afternoon, and the alabaster lamp above the reading table cast a soft glow, when the bronze door which opened from the passage was thrown back with a clang and Mother came in in a great hurry. "Oh, cousin," she cried, "what think you happened?"

Cousin Adrian, without a frown, though he disliked noise and excitement, answered, "Tell me, Elaine, and spare me the effort of thinking."

"The snake charmer, a strange-looking old creature, Hindoo or something, died; dropped back dead, and

the basket in front of him was full of serpents, deadly serpents, and a guard near shot two of them with a pistol, and the third was getting away. There was a terrible panic; indeed, many would have been killed except for the fact that the side tent was not full of people, the performance being in full swing in the large one." She paused for breath and then hurried on.

"There was a girl—a child, the old man's assistant, and she seized the creature, a most horrible looking reptile it was, and wrapped it about her like a scarf and then fell on her knees by the old man and wept and wept. But the great serpent—it was a horrible sight—coiled itself partly about the dead man, and there they were, the dead man and the living child, linked together by that horrible twisting serpent. They could not separate them for the child would not leave him and no one dared force her."

Uncle Adrian closed his book. "Tell Peter to bring the carriage," he said. "I will go to town and see."

"If you would," cried Mother, "you might speak to her in her own language, you know so many of the dialects of strange countries. Poor child —I felt so sorry for her," and then, seeing my white face and great eyes staring out from behind the mummy case, she ran to me and clasping me in her arms, kissed me many times, greatly to my discomfiture.

When Uncle Adrian came back from town that night, he was not alone in the carriage and he walked into the great hall bearing a slight figure in his arms. I knew, as did my mother, that it was the Indian child and her first words were, "I am glad you brought her, but I hope the snakes are not along, too." Uncle Adrian frowned and shook his head at her, and the child turned her face on his shoulder, and after one look at us and the amazed servants behind us, closed her eyes again with a weary sigh.

I called her child she was so slim and unformed, but she must have been fourteen or sixteen years of age. Her hair was jet black and a mass of curls, her brows were delicate and finely marked, and her lashes long and thick. Her eyes seemed to change from gray to brown or black, and she looked at us all with a look of aloofness, of pride. For Uncle Adrian alone, came that change of glance, that exquisite smile curving her red lips and those lights of love glowing in her mysterious eyes. He bade my mother take her and let her be bathed and dressed anew, for her tinseled drapings were torn and soiled, and he brought from one of the old carved chests a robe of linen; an Indian princess had once worn it. "This," said he, "will do until we find her proper clothes." And, so well did it fit, that it might have been designed for her.

When we were alone, he told us that he had killed the serpent and unwound it from the living and the dead, and finding the circus people had no use for the child he had offered to take her and give her a home.

Before long the strange girl was as much at home in the great house as those whose years there had numbered more than her hours. Her name was Nourmadee, and that is what Uncle Adrian ever called her, but to the rest she was simply Norma. She was a quiet girl, unobtrusive, and seemed to

love best to spend her days in the great vaulted library. Sometimes, but rarely, she would play with me, quiet games of fancy, but she loved best of all to sit upon an Indian stool at Uncle Adrian's knee and listen as he read, fixing adoring eyes upon him as he studied some of the old tomes. There was a rare companionship between them, and it was unbroken until after she had been with us a year or more.

Uncle Adrian sent her away to school. She left us reluctantly, and strange and silent as she had ever been, her going made a break in our lives. When the school years were over, she was sent to us in the autumn, and as she entered our hall the night of her return, and stood tall and graceful as some fair princess of the East, Uncle Adrian's face changed as we had never seen it, and he held out his arms toward her, unmindful of us, who stared even as we had on that other night when he had brought her, a ragged, dusty child, to us.

Then I cried, as she held out her slender hands toward the log fire in the great fireplace, "Uncle Adrian! Uncle Adrian! Her hand is like the bronze hand—just exactly!" They all started. And Uncle Adrian, taking her hand in his, said softly, "And if it is, Lancelot, I believe my solitary days are over."

Norma seemed to dislike the bronze hand. She never touched it or seemed curious about it, and now, as I ran to fetch it from the table, she shivered and drew back. But Mother, laughing, took her hand in hers and, placing it upon the broad arm of the great oak settee, laid the bronze beside it, and it was as I had cried, the hands were exact, and Uncle Adrian, turning her slender palm upward, traced upon the rosy skin the same lines and markings, and bending his courtly head, he kissed the hand of Norma as he said, "You all know the words I have ever said. Here is the living hand, and it is mine."

Norma smiled her rare, beautiful smile and said, very softly, "It is yours." And then, turning to me with a shiver, she said, "Take it away, Lancelot, I love it not."

Uncle Adrian, looking from it to her said, "And why?"

And she replied, "It chills me and there is a demon stone in the bracelet."

Uncle Adrian, smiling happily, answered, "'Tis but the stone they call black opal—an odd stone—but with no power for harm within it, but take it back, Lancelot. What care I for the hand of bronze when I hold in mine its living replica?"

As I took it, the stone in the serpent's mouth seemed to blaze strangely —green and crimson, but it must have been only my fancy, or the fire, for when I placed it on its teakwood stand there were no colors there.

There was a great difference in years between Uncle Adrian and Nourmadee, but that mattered not to them, for they were one in heart, and I have ever believed that souls have no knowledge of our reckoned time.

My mother was glad it was so, for now that Uncle Adrian would have a wife, and the great house a mistress, she could leave him and live abroad such as she had ere desired to do. Only gratitude had kept her there so long and since, by his skilful wisdom, our shattered fortune had been re-

prieved, we would not want for money to lead as gay a life as she chose. I, the cripple Lancelot, was of two minds. My heart was here, in the quiet house, and yet I loved my mother, and I was all she had, so I was to go with her for a while and perhaps return to them later.

It was beautiful to see the two so interested in each other, and yet so undemonstrative. My mother would jest and cry, "What a pair of lovers! Instead of fragrant flowers, he brings her musty books; instead of bon-bons, strange crystals and broken stones! And pray Norma, has he ever kissed you?" But they minded not her words. Sometimes, in the twilight, she would take one of the strange harps which were hung around the walls, and striking the strings softly, would sing to him sad, weird songs in some unknown tongue. It was thus until the date set for their marriage.

To please my mother there was to be a wedding supper, and the rector of the village church was to marry them. They let her plan it all for them, and showed no interest in aught but each other. I had gone to the library to be out of the way of the decorators, and mounting the stairs to the narrow gallery which ran across one side of the room, I was soon absorbed in examining a curious book of vellum, which was kept in one of the cases behind the gallery. From the banister hung soft Persian rugs and silken carpets, and as I sat upon the top step, I was invisible from the room below. I was so engrossed that I did not hear them enter, and when I did realize, they were beneath me in the Turkish corner. I did not call or speak to them. I glanced down and thought that Mother, who complained of these cold lovers, should be in my place to see them. Norma twined her arms lovingly about his neck, and her queenly head rested on his shoulder, as they sat together on the broad divan beneath the velvet curtains. "Adrian, Adrian," she cried over and over, as he kissed her, and the name sounded as if each letter in it was a love word.

I watched a moment and sighed, for well I knew that I, the cripple, could never have such in my life. Then I turned my head aside and thought bitterly of that fever which had twisted my limbs and stunted my body, but had left me with brain to think, and heart to love. I did not note what the lovers beneath me said till presently I heard her cry, "Not that Adrian, do not speak it."

"But why? It is a foolish fancy, since I know the bracelet cannot be removed, and I know it is a vain wish, but I would it could be so."

"Tell me truly," she said, "would it make you very happy?" and her voice had strange tones in it. "It would, indeed," he answered, "for I have been a sentimental boy about the thing ever since I found it far across the water, and now that the living hand, the hand as perfect in contour as the bronze model, is to be mine forever, I know no gift I could bestow which would give me so much pleasure as to be able to clasp about this dainty wrist," (here there came to me the sound of a caress), "the golden serpent which encircles that other yonder. It is but a fancy, Nourmadee; have patience with me, for I know it cannot

be removed save by cutting or breaking it and that would mar its perfection. Stay—why leave me?"

"I will return," she said, and bending down, I saw her softly loose his clinging arm and cross the room.

She wore that night a gown of gauzy white, and about her she had wound a scarf of net sewed thickly with gold sequins which glittered and clung about her slender form. She had ever a fancy for winding about her scarfs of a fantastic pattern which made even her modern gowns appear odd and oriential. Nourmadee was not of dark skin, and rose tints were in her cheeks and lips and her movements were all of wonderful grace.

She passed slowly across the soft carpet with head bent and, as she came to the teakwood stand, I saw her raise her clasped hands before her with a gesture of despair, then she returned to the divan with that same slow, hesitating movement.

Uncle Adrian looked at her with a smile; then she dropped on her knees before him, and held out her arms. On the smooth skin of her left wrist glittered a new ornament. He bent toward her, then started back.

"It is the bracelet," he cried. "How did you get it?"

"Ah," she said, "my fingers touched a secret spring, perchance, and it was in my hand. Is it pleasing you, Adrian, to see it here?" and she held her palm upward with a motion of slow grace. The curious stone, the black opal, was on the inner side of her wrist and gleamed like an emerald.

"Look!" he cried, "even the dull stone is transformed when it is near you. See it flash and glow!" And bending his head, he raised the hand in his and pressed his lips upon her wrist.

At that instant, a low, wailing cry broke from the girl and, rising to her feet, she raised her arms again in that strange gesture of despair and cried, "The sting of the serpent! The sting of the serpent! Adrian! Adrian! Adrian!"

At her cry, Uncle Adrian had risen from the couch in amazement and she flung herself down upon it. The hand with the bracelet was thrown outward and he knelt beside her and held it closely, looking at her in surprise.

"Nourmadee," he said softly, "what mean those words?"

"Death—swift death," she answered. "Even now I feel the chill creeping up my veins. Tell me, is not my hand growing cold?"

"It is," he replied, kissing it fervently, "but I will warm it thus and thus."

"Ah, no!" she shuddered. "Put not your lips near that demon stone. Ah, Adrian, come closer—closer. Hold me when it grows dark and cold and when my eyes no longer see you. This—this is what I feared, but I hoped the old tales were but tales."

"Let me ring for help—for a physician," cried Uncle Adrian in alarm, seeing something was very wrong.

"No, it is of no use; let our last moments be together and alone," she said faintly.

I had half risen to descend the stairs, but at that I paused. I could not let them know that they were not alone. "Let me rest in your arms until it is over," she said, placing her head with a great effort on his shoul-

der and raising her arms heavily to place them about his neck. "This," she said, "I saw in a dream long before the day you brought me here. I knew it was to come, but I hoped not thus quickly."

And as her eyes closed, he clasped her closely and kissed her frantically. She smiled with white lips.

"When I can no longer speak to you," she said, very slowly, "place your lips against mine and keep them there until my heart is still. I can feel you near while there is life in me, and now, beloved, I see nothing but a dark river; it is creeping up slowly—slowly—but your arms can hold me above the flood. It is dark and cold, and the serpents, now they are coming, —the glittering demon serpents,—but they cannot hurt me with you near! On the other side, in the twilight land, I will await you, Adrian. It will not be long; something tells me this. Why —you are near me still? That is good; you are coming with me all the way. The evil powers—the fiends of darkness—we can face them together without fear! Kiss me now, Adrian, and stay near me beloved—beloved."

There was a silence. I leaned over and watching, saw the arm about his neck slipping down across his shoulder. His gray head was bent closely over her face, hiding it. I was in deadly terror—afraid to cry—afraid to remain silent. As I watched, I saw a small shining creature slip along the fold of Norma's gown. It seemed to glide across the floor,—a horrid thing with head of fire, then I heard my Mother singing in the corridor:

"Let no ill dreams my sleep possess
Nor powers of darkness me molest."

She sang cheerfully and the words thawed my frozen terror and screaming wildly I cried, "They are here, mother,—the powers of darkness! They are in here!" I stumbled down the stairs, pitching forward and falling in a faint as she entered. It was after I awoke in my room, long after, that they told me the two had been found dead in each other's arms. The doctors in the village had found a small purple mark upon the wrist of Nourmadee,—a bruise or bite of some venomous insect,—but had pronounced her death as caused by meningitis,—sudden and fatal. Uncle Adrian, they said, had died from the shock.

They thought I raved when I told of the creature I had seen gliding across the floor, but one of Uncle Adrian's friends who came out to see us, listened to me patiently and told me we would try to find it.

I closed my eyes at first, when we reached the library, for I could not bear to look upon it, but the weakness passed and I controlled my tears.

"Where was it?" said Doctor Paul. "Tell me just where and how it was."

So I showed him where I had been that night.

"It was when they were quite still," I said, "and it ran across her sparkly scarf and down her dress, and disappeared yonder, and it was all shiny and small and its head glowed like a coal."

"We will see," said Doctor Paul. "We will search thoroughly, and if we find nothing you must never think of it again for it will be only a bad dream."

He began to move the pillows and draperies on the couch and turned the heavy rugs on the floor as if deter-

mined to humor me, and then, moving the great tiger skin, he stopped, and bending over, raised a golden bauble, the bracelet of the bronze hand.

"Here, Lancelot," he said, "is a serpent, but a harmless one."

"Ah," I cried, "that is what it was then, after all, and the firelight made the opal glow."

"'Tis dull enough now," he said, "and it is a curious thing; the workmanship is rare. Look, Lancelot, how the scales fit one over the other. There must be a secret clasp to unite the head and tail, and so it can be made to fit the wearer whoever she may be. A unique thing; let us see the clasp."

As he turned it over in his palm, he gave a great start, his face changed.

"Aha!" he cried, "I think that perhaps, after all, this is no harmless thing. Tell me again all that you saw that day."

And I told him while he listened with frowning attention. At the end of it, he lifted the serpent bracelet by the tip of its tail as if it had been alive, and said, "Come, Lancelot, let us go. I wish to take this back to the city with me; there is something about it which I fear."

"Will you tell me truly—what it is some time?" I said, and he answered that he would.

I had hoped to remain at the old house, but my mother was eager to depart. She could not carry out her cherished desire of living abroad for there were matters connected with the estate which compelled our remaining, but the tragedy had so affected her that she would take a short trip despite that.

I wrote a short note to Doctor Paul, telling him we were going hurriedly and begging him to come to see us.

We sat before the fireplace in the library the evening of his visit. It was a haunted room now, but I had a sick fancy to be there and Mother humored me, but the place seemed thick with shadows in spite of the light and fire. After a few words Doctor Paul said to mother, "Of course you understood there was a mystery about your cousin's death?"

"Why, no," said mother. "It was a singular coincidence; but we know what the doctor said."

"Doctors do not always know," said Doctor Paul gravely. "I might have given you the same verdict as your village physician. And yet, I thought from the first, there was a mystery. Had I known the circumstances, or of any manner in which she might have— However, my friends, I will tell you. Nourmadee died from a deadly poison administered through this agency." And taking from his pocket a case, he opened it, revealing the golden bracelet with the opal black and dull within its jaws.

"The bracelet from the bronze hand," cried Mother, in surprise. "How—and when?"

"You have heard of the famous poison ring," he said, "the evil art which, at one time, could by the clasp of a hand, force the tiny needle laden with poison in the victim's vein? That is the principle upon which this devilish ornament was constructed. Beneath that stone, whatever it may be, is the poison receptacle, and the poison-laden needle is even now (after claiming one of which we know, and

God alone knows how many more), still deadly enough to end a dozen lives. As for the manner in which she received it, I fear my poor friend killed her when he kissed the bracelet as it clasped about her wrist. Did she know the secret of the bronze hand? That we can never know. Adrian could never learn its history and yet she must have had, in some mysterious way, knowledge which caused her to fear it."

"Did that kill Adrian?" cried Mother.

"I cannot say," replied Doctor Paul. "Possibly it did, for Lancelot saw him place his lips to the spot where the poison had entered while the wound was quite fresh. And yet he had ever a heart weakness. It might have been only a natural giving out under the stress of great emotion. I am glad for his sake that it was so. To live without her,—that would have been too hard, and I,—scoffer that I am, cannot think of them except as living anew together some where—some place—completing in harmony life's interrupted song."

And Mother, her eyes wet with tears, said softly, "In their deaths they are united."

The doctor bowed his head silently. Then he dropped the fatal bracelet on the glowing coals and we watched it melt away.

Out beyond, under the shadow of the great oak, they rest together in their marble tomb, and over in the shadow on the teakwood stand, the bronze hand still points its finger toward eternity.

The Man Who Looked Like Warfield

BY J. BERNARD LYNCH

ALONG the white-lit thoroughfare the theatre throng moved steadily, as myriad needles drawn by the magnet of gleaming letters. Street cars and taxis jockeyed for position in unloading their freights of impatient humans.

A part of the merry procession, yet quite alone, a girl treaded her way.

Above the entrance of Boston's newest theatre she read in letters of fire, "David Warfield—The Music Master." Her eyes lit with joy, while her face grew thoughtful.

One of the throng in the lobby, not of the line, was a young man.

"A dollar seat, please," he heard her say.

"One?"

"Yes. You see, I am alone,"—confidingly.

The ticket seller looked amused and the next man smiled.

"A dollar seat, please," he repeated, "next to the one just sold."

The ticket seller looked up.

The overture being over and the curtain cue impending, he noticed that she had quite forgotten a programme.

"Allow me," he ventured. "I seem to have picked up more than I need."

"Oh, thank you." Then, "I was so excited, I quite forgot."

"It's a fine play and Warfield's a great actor," the man volunteered.

"I just adore the drama," she rambled on. "I'm—I'm an actress myself!"

She waited for this piece of news to be fully absorbed, then her girlish pride became tempered with natural honesty, and she went on, "at least I've appeared in amateur plays."

"Are you alone this evening?" he asked, the curtain being, for some unknown reason, still delayed.

"Yes, quite alone. I had to tell the ticket seller, for he was giving seats to everyone in pairs."

"Well, I'm alone too," he returned.

A little later she touched him on the arm. "I'm awfully stupid—but would you please tell me which is Mr. Warfield?"

He pointed out the star, whom she had doubtless sought among the younger men in the group. After that there was no chance of interrupting her. Like a true student of art, she leaned, head on hand, drinking in every word. This appreciation developed as the sad little story unrolled itself. When the Master's piano was taken away she breathed excitedly. When the spaghetti was eaten she laughed heartily. And to the great scene, when the Music Master claims his child in those never-to-be-forgotten words, "If you don't want her, I want her," the country lass paid the tribute of many tears.

"An emotional little piece of goods,"

mused the cynic beside her.

At last it was all over—the Music Master had packed his trunk for a share in the honeymoon of the young lovers and the curtain fell to an accompaniment of smiles that had been preceded by tears almost to the last. The girl seemed to recollect where she was.

"Surely, surely David Warfield is a great actor—great as the most famous of them?" she asked once more, as if desirous of having her own opinion endorsed.

"I think so," he said indulgently, as if he might have thought any other way, but for pleasing her. In the meantime, he had ventured to help her with her wraps, and they walked out together like old-time acquaintances.

"Well, I must hurry home," she told him, when they were on the street.

His eyes twinkled. "Perhaps you would join me in a—a little refreshment—a trifle of ice cream—or a sandwich. We don't want our friendship cut so suddenly short."

"Oh, I couldn't. I must hurry home."

"Then," he remarked, "I will have the pleasure of walking with you," and tucked her arm beneath his without more ado.

"You and I," she told him, reprovingly, "have been to a play together, and here you are seeing me home and we don't even know each other's name. Mine's Ruth Carter. Yours—?"

"Just a moment," and he reached for his card case. Fingering the contents carefully, he selected one card slightly larger than the rest and gave it to the girl. "Mr. Harry Long," she read, by a friendly street light. "That's a real nice name, I think."

"If you are interested in actor folk," he remarked, "perhaps I could get you introductions to some of them. I am known to a good many stage celebrities."

"Oh," she cried, with the impressiveness she always gave that simple exclamation, "what would not I give to meet the great actor we saw this evening—Mr. Warfield!"

He paused, in deep thought. "I'm afraid that would be impossible," he was beginning, slowly, then, with a quick tap on the forehead, he burst out, "No, it is not impossible. It can be arranged. It shall be. I will bring Mr. Warfield to call upon you tomorrow evening. Tell me where."

"Oh, dear! I hadn't thought. I'm not—not able to receive visitors," was her crestfallen response.

"Not able to receive? But my dear Miss Carter, you live somewhere—you have a home?"

"This is not Ashburnham. I'm only a lady's maid here—I live out and have to use the servant's entrance. This is my evening off. Tomorrow I wake up to slavery again."

"Too bad, too bad," he replied, pressing her hand openly, now he was assured of her menial condition in life.

"Of course," she faltered, "I don't have to always use the basement door. Just now madam—in fact all the family—are at Palm Beach, and as I'm chummy with the parlor maid she tells me it's nonsense to always go down the last flight. But I have never

had company since I came here."

"Miss Carter," interrupted the man, in a low, insinuating tone, "did you say you had been an actress?"

"Just an amateur."

"Let me bring Mr. Warfield to the house tomorrow. Receive him in the drawing-room. Personate the daughter—or niece—of your employer. Borrow an evening gown to dress the part. Trust to your woman's wit, little one, and you will never regret it."

"This is the place," she broke in, halting before a high stooped mansion of brownstone, with the usual basement grille. A dim light shone from the area door.

She ran lightly in, and he turned away with a queer smile.

"Heigho! You can't catch all birds with salt. Sometimes you need sugar. And now I must go and secure my David Warfield."

Rudolph Heins, smilingly reminding himself that his name was Harry Long, and that Miss Ruth Carter—via Main 600—had declared she was willing to metamorphose herself into Miss Amy Briggs that evening, strolled into the appraiser's office of a certain collateral loan company.

"Harry out?"

"Mr. Long? Oh, no. Step right in."

The gilded gate swung open and Heins entered, almost as welcome as if he were the bearer of five thousand dollars' worth of diamonds on which he wanted a trifle of two thousand "to tide over till the ghost walked." He was greeted by a man of about his own age, and in a jiffy Heins had unburdened himself of last night's adventure. His friend, the appraiser clerk, laughed, but not whole-heartedly.

"What's the idea?" he wanted to know.

"Well, she's a cute little thing and I'd like to see more of her. I thought first she was going to be easy to make the running with but somehow, she holds one off without seeming to know what she's about. I suppose it's her innocence."

"Of course," returned the other, impatiently. "Poor little girl! She's come from a town where everyone knows everyone else, or at least knows all about 'em. She thought no more of speaking to you in the theatre or letting you see her home than she would of being friends with a new farmer lad at a church sociable or a fireman's ball. Poor little simp!"

"However that may be, I'm simply bound to see her again. She is pretty enough to be caught by someone in this man's town, so why not me?"

The other sighed. "Oh, I presume you are bound to have your own way. But why have you come to me?"

"Stupid. Can't you see I've got to have a Dave Warfield?"

"Yes?"

"And you know you were addressed once in the café of the Brewster Hotel, twice on the street, and numerous times in theatre lobbies, by the name of that worthy. I presume were you to line up with him there'd be no resemblance at all, but the likeness is good enough for Ruth Carter, surely, since it has already given you the soubriquet among the boys—'The Man Who Looks Like Warfield.'"

"So you want me—"

"To play the part of a great actor for one evening."

"The reward?"

"An evening's amusement; sight of a Back Bay mansion; aid to a suffering friend."

"Suffering nothing! If I do go into the thing it won't be to aid you in securing an addition for your long list of playthings, but rather to aid the little country girl in making a break —perchance for Ashburnham and the society of the respectable, if stupid, cows and pigs. I shall look her over and get a line on her style. If she's city-wise, all right, go ahead. If not, you'll play according to limit and I'll name the limit."

So it happened that, at exactly half past eleven o'clock that evening, a car stopped at the curb before the Briggs mansion and two men in correct evening dress alighted and told the driver to wait.

Preceded by the soft rustle of silken skirts, a vision of loveliness dawned under the shaded lights. The men arose together.

"Miss Briggs, allow me to present Mr. Warfield."

"I am delighted to meet Mr. Warfield," she returned with a perfect dignity. Then, motioning her callers to seats, she sank languidly against the upholstery of a cozy fauteuil.

While "Mr. Warfield" led the conversation into channels where his ignorance of an actor's life would not be in evidence, Heins let his gaze wander freely over the little lady. Never had fairy wand wrought greater change. He had been quite in the wrong, he reflected, when he had declared it impossible that the girl should appear beautiful or even of notable style. She now measured fully to every idle expectation. The yellow hair, once carelessly disposed, had become a golden coiffure charmingly dressed. The gown selected, wherever borrowed, was exactly right as to color and fashion. Above all, her manner was beyond criticism.

As the idle chat languished, the girl tentatively directed "Warfield's" attention to the fine paintings on the walls. Now as appraiser's clerk, the man really knew something of modern art and thought it a safe lead to follow, since actors were notorious connoisseurs and collectors.

"Uncle's special fad," the girl volunteered, "is ceramic art, not antiques, but modern examples of Chinese and Japanese porcelains and pottery."

"Warfield" said that he, too, was interested in ceramics.

"Then," cried the girl, "you will like to look at my uncle's latest addition to his collection. Come this way," and she led the men into a tiny withdrawing room where, alone in a magnificent cabinet, stood a splendid example of oriental ceramics.

"It arrived shortly before he left home," she said; "he was *so* delighted to receive it. I believe he placed the commission a year ago and had almost given up hope of his agent's securing anything worth buying. This pleased him so much that he sent the check while he made the car wait. It was for a thousand dollars. That seems an awful lot for one vase, doesn't it?"

As he continued to look admiringly at the lovely object, the girl opened the cabinet and said, "I will take it to

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the pedestal so you may examine it on all sides. It really should stand there always, but during uncle's absence he wished it kept in the cabinet because it would be safer."

She was about to make the transference with her own hands but, suddenly remembering her role of fine lady, she turned to the bell, and summoned the maid with the world-wise face, in whom Heins seemed to recognize the friendly parlor maid.

"Take the bust off the pedestal, Marie," was the order given, "and put the vase in its place."

"Certainly, ma'amselle."

And then both art critics enjoyed themselves for another half hour. At the end of that time Heins felt he had been without innings quite long enough.

"This is all very well," he said, laughing, "and I presume you two would go on all night finding points for admiration in that vase. I admire it myself, since I learned it cost a thousand dollars. I'm a good easy admirer, especially when things cost money. You ought to see the admiration I can hand out to a three thousand dollar car. It's only exceeded by what I feel for a seven thousand dollar one. But, Miss Briggs, you are neglecting your opportunities."

"How so?" she cried, and looked apprehensive. Had her art interest been beside the part? Certainly not, she reflected. Her comments had been picked up from the great Mrs. Briggs herself, found talking to visitors when she, Ruth, came in to help Marie hand tea.

"Well, here you have a great man in your home, and you haven't spoken a single word about the theatre."

"It is so good of Miss Briggs," hastily interposed "Warfield," with a glare at Heins behind the girl's back, "to spare me any such references."

Heins, having effected a diversion, now drew near the piano and absently struck C-major. The girl seemed to think this a signal, for she at once began to express her regret that she could not give them any music.

"My musical talent—if I had any—was sadly neglected in my youth," she said, merrily. "But perhaps you play?" turning to "Warfield."

He shook his head. "Then," she laughed, "Mr. Long must perform for us."

"Warfield" bit his lip at the name, but agreed rather solemnly to the proposition.

His scheme was obviously to get the objectionable third person out of the group, as Heins saw well enough, but unable to think of an excuse, and perhaps willing that the girl should enjoy his playing, he obediently gave them some bits of Chopin with considerable skill. Then he drifted into popular stuff, and ere long was regaling the thousand dollar ceramic with an enticing waltz.

"Come now, Miss Briggs," he cried, "give your hand to 'Warfield' there, and do a one-step. It will be something to remember in after years—for me—that my humble efforts induced a disciple of Thespis to woo Terpsichore."

She was all lightness, and he proved a partner worthy of her grace. Heins did his best, and on the third round, they found that their steps accorded perfectly.

TIGHTLY BOUND

At this time Marie, evidently thinking the art view was completed, went to put the much admired vase back in its cabinet. Despite her worldly-wise face she was a bit stupid, for half way across the room she paused, open-mouthed, to gape at the dancing couple, without seeming to reflect that she stood directly in their path. On they came, absorbed in each other and rhythmic motion; presto, Heins's fingers flew above the keyboard; with a start the girl recollected herself and drew back, too late, alas, too late. She lost her hold on the vase and gave a shriek of despair as it fell to the floor.

Heins heard the crash and turned to see what had happened. There was the maid, on her knees among the bits, tearing her hair and threatening hysterics; there stood Ruth Carter, as if turned to stone; while "Warfield" was hurriedly taking the blame to himself.

"It was my fault entirely—oh, entirely," he was saying. "Don't go on so, my good girl. You will frighten Miss Briggs. I will be responsible to Mr. Briggs for the cost and possibly his agent may be able to secure a duplicate."

He was living the part now and hadn't begun to calculate how long it would take to accumulate one thousand dollars on an income of twenty-five dollars per week. To Heins, however, there was a grim financial side to the evening's fun. He had said the expenses were on him. How much did that mean, to a good sport?

"Lucky we kept the taxi," he muttered. "I had a hunch we might need it for a quick getaway."

"But we can't go now," severely.

"Why not? We've no place here. We're in wrong."

"We cannot leave that little thing to face the results of our joint carelessness. Were she the real Miss Briggs—perhaps, yes. As you said just now, a fond uncle would overlook an accident on the part of a favorite niece. This poor girl will certainly be compelled to seek a new job and she will be decidedly in bad unless she's provided with the wherewithal to at least pay the value of the smashed article. The money in her hand will give credit to her story of why she played such a mad prank. Mr. and Mrs. Briggs will believe Warfield really did call, and that may in a way excuse the kid. Now," as he anticipated caustic comment from his friend, "suppress that cynicism. It isn't sentiment I'm actuated by—it's just a spark of the chivalry existent in any real man."

Heins bit his lip, and to avoid further discussion went back to the scene of the disaster, where he stood absently kicking the bits about. Despite his desire to always avoid the melodramatic and have things easy and comfortable about him, this affair was surcharged with emotion. It made him think of about a million plays. Here they all were, sobbing ingenue, assisting in weeping by suddenly sobered soubrette, chivalric hero, and—yes—gentlemanly villain, engaged in seeking the downfall of the heroine and foiled by circumstance. He was near to completing the picture by the lighting of a cigarette. He pulled himself together and decided that he would have to pay,

if only to "save his face." Harry Long was just crazy enough to assume the task, though he had only his modest twenty-five to depend upon. He saw how it would end. He, Heins, would ante up. He could do it, but the amount would represent more than a hundred nights of pleasure.

He continued to stare at the broken bits, as if reasoning what each piece represented. Then he began to think, and rapidly. Was it not possible to restore china, however shattered?

He tapped the waiting Marie on the shoulder imperatively, and as she raised her swollen face exclaimed, "That will do. You have sobbed enough. Now, run quickly and get me a satchel."

"Oh, Mr. Long," exclaimed Ruth, "what are you thinking of?"

"Saving you," the counterfeit Long returned indulgently, and feeling that whatever happened she was now as good as his own property. "We will see what an expert can make of fragments. If he is successful in restoring the vase there will be no need of confession—unless your conscience is over tender. Otherwise, there is always Mr. Warfield's check. And certainly Mr. Briggs would be satisfied with the vase as good as ever, plus the price of another art treasure.

Ruth brightened at the hint of hope, dried her eyes, and sprang to her feet. "Come, Marie," she cried, "help me to find the tissue and cotton. You know—upstairs in the dressing room, where we used such quantities packing the jewels."

But the stupid girl continued to sit bewildered on the floor, regarding Heins in complete amazement.

Heins dashed into the Collateral Loan Company's place as if an object of pursuit, swept aside the receiving clerk with a wave of the hand, opened the iron door for himself, and came pantingly to a halt near the chair where Harry Long placed the "big" clients.

"Listen, fool," he shouted, with no pretence of introducing the subject, "you and I have come perilously near being marks in a gum game."

"Huh?"

"That vase, that wonderful piece of pottery which 'Uncle' Briggs obtained from Japan and paid his thou' for, was a plant. Don't stare, it gets my goat. A plant, just an ordinary plant."

"But—but what's the evidence?"

"Furnished by the china restorer. He's a big man, the best in the biz. I have that on absolute authority. He sent for me this morning and wanted to know if I really desired him to expend his skill on an imitation affair, which could probably be bought for five dollars or less."

Long, bewildered, dropped his chin in his hand and tapped his lips with his forefinger. Finally he blurted out, "Do you mean to say you think Mr. Briggs was fooled by his agents?"

"Mr. Briggs? Sure not. Briggs is a connoisseur of fame, so the worker in china assures me. Briggs never saw such a vase. The girl is an adventuress; she put the tawdry ornament on show, intending it should meet with an accident some time during the evening and the rich actor be made to pay."

"I can't believe it."

"Well, it's obviously true, whether

you believe it or not. Recollect, didn't she lead the conversation into the line of art, directing your attention to a picture above the mantel, when your eyes were idly roving about? After that 'twas a direct road to the other drawing room, the cabinet, and the crash. Taking the vase from the cabinet, too, was at her suggestion. You could really see it just as well where it stood. And she it was who told Marie to put it back before you started that dancing stunt. And even my being at the piano was her doing."

"It seems incredible," moaned Long.

"To you—yes. Perchance, had you been permitted to gaze longer into those moist orbs of innocence you would have offered her your hand in addition to your bank account." Then, warming to the exposition with the inspiring thought that a thousand dollar incubus had just slipped from his shoulders, he went on, "In good plain English, we were classified as fall guys—dupes—the species on which a supposedly unsophisticated country maid may perform an extortion stunt. She's probably working at the Briggs's house in order to admit a second story worker some dinner party night; in the meantime, little Rudolph Heins and his pal Davy Warfield come along and might be worked. It was a clever frame-up and almost successful because our knowledge of valuable pottery has excruciating limitations."

Against such preponderance of patent fact, Long realized the futility of defense. He thought of offering in rebuttal the eagerness of the girl to pack up the broken bits, but decided silence the better part. Heins would assert that she intended to get and cash the check and decamp before the deception was discovered—or say she did not understand the knowledge possessed by china restorers.

Tired of inactivity, he made up his mind to a step as to the advisability of which he would not consult Heins. He walked calmly to the Briggs residence, climbed the immaculate steps and rang the sacred door-bell. Only then did he reflect as to what name he should give the girl in asking for her. Luckily the door was opened by the footboy who had not been in evidence the former evening.

"May I speak with Miss Carter?"

"Miss Carter? Oh, she isn't here now."

"Do you suppose," he ventured, "that you could secure her address for me?"

"No, sir, I couldn't," blurted out the lad. "Mrs. Briggs give orders she shouldn't tell any of us where she was going, and Miss Carter said herself she had no friends and would get a furnished room."

"Thank you."

A week passed and the Monday following drew near to a close. It had been a heavy day, and looking at the clock for the fiftieth time, Long noted gratefully that it lacked ten minutes of the hour for going home.

The last comer reached the opening.

"How much on this, please?" said a soft, feminine voice, and its owner held out a tiny watch.

Long jumped, then tried to steady himself. He must get rid of this obsession. Impossible that every feminine voice, from that of the waiter in his breakfast café to this

applicant for a loan, should be hers and hers alone. He reached for the gewgaw, but as his face became plainly visible in the light he heard a gasp, and the terrified inquiry, "Mr. Warfield—you here?"

In an instant he had the door open and Ruth Carter ensconced in his swivel chair. "Wait," he whispered huskily, and stood outside until each of the other clerks had uttered his "Good night, Long," and gone into the street. Then, locking the door, and switching off the lights in the waiting room, he came back to the trembling girl.

"What does it mean?" she asked. "Mr. Warfield certainly wouldn't be in a pawnshop—working. And those other men called you Long."

"No. Mr. Warfield, the real Mr. Warfield, works in another sort of shop. If he ever visited a pawnbroker it was a good many years ago and he stood outside the grille. My name is Harry Long."

"But that's your friend who brought you to see me."

"No, he is Rudolph Heins. He gave you my card because he chanced to have it with him, and his natural caution tells him never to give away anything, not even his identity."

"Then you both—both entered into a plan to deceive me?" She was reproachful with the natural petulance of a perfectly honest girl. His heart throbbed with joy as he listened.

"Remember," he said in a low tone, "I did it before I had met you. And you were not quite—not absolutely—frank yourself."

"No!" she smiled grimly. "I suppose you knew all the time I was common Ruth Carter pretending to be the fashionable Miss Briggs. But I, too, believed it no harm for once—and then I expected a great reward for my venture. It seemed my one chance to meet a famous man on equal terms. But you—I cannot imagine what you supposed would be your reward."

"I did it to oblige Heins, I suppose—because he urged it." Impossible to tell her of suspicions regarding his friend's intentions, and the Bayardish resolve to protect an innocent girl, even before setting eyes on her.

While they talked, he never lost consciousness of the possible great deception, that of the vase; but she seemed so oblivious of the incident that he wondered how it would get explained. Then he was aware of an envelope on his desk slide. It was directed to "Mr. David Warfield, Theatre," but had not been opened. She held it out, actually laughing.

"Think what I have done," she cried. "Just as soon as I had explored the great vase mystery I wrote out a full account and took it to the theatre where I saw Mr. Warfield play 'The Music Master.' They told me there that he had gone away and was playing this week in Washington. I intended mailing the letter to him then, and that was truly why I came here to pawn my watch. I expect money from home in a day or so and have promise of a new situation by Wednesday. I'm at the Y. W. C. A. and don't have to pay board until the end of the week, so really, I can get along without money, but I actually had not a penny to buy

a postage stamp and I considered it best to register this, too, so I would feel assured Mr. Warfield received it. If he had—if I had gone into any other pawnshop! I was very near entering the one on the corner, only I saw some rude men, half drunken, coming out, and then I remembered reading once that the 'Collateral Loan Co.' was under municipal control and quite respectable."

He did not enlighten her as to the liberal interpretation of that generic term "under strict municipal control"—he was too eager to read "Mr. Warfield's" missive. This is what was written, in a dainty, slightly unformed hand:

"Dear Mr. Warfield:—

I am going to begin by asking you to please, please forgive a silly little girl who did a dangerous thing just because she was so crazy to meet you and see what you were like in an ordinary room—the great man who nightly holds hundreds entranced in a vast theatre. I am not Miss Briggs, but only a servant in that house.

When you left that evening you said you would send a check to cover cost of that unlucky vase, whether or not the china restorer could repair it. I made up my mind I would tell Mrs. Briggs what had happened and take the consequences.

The next morning word came that Mr. and Mrs. Briggs would be home earlier than expected. They were coming that very evening. Marie rushed to me with the news, wringing her hands. She wanted me to send instantly for the check, and then both run away. It dawned on me she intended to cash the check and divide the sum. She had no idea of making good to Mr. Briggs. I was shocked and began to think her not so nice a girl as she had first seemed when she took to me on my entrance, a mere greenhorn, into the servant world of that great establishment. I told her she should not leave my room until Mrs. Briggs came back and we both had a chance to explain. For, after all, Marie was much to blame. Only for her stupidity in getting in our way (and she is usually very quick) the accident would not have occurred. And then it was really she who made me decide on carrying out the prank. I told her of your friend's proposal when I got home from the theatre and said I could never agree, but she asserted otherwise, and securing the 'phone number actually sent the message, saying the plan was perfected, using my name, and coming to me later saying, 'Now, Ruth, don't be a squealer, you got to do it.'

How we stormed about my little room, she begging me to let her go and finally trying to force me to give up the key, but I had put it down my neck and she couldn't get it. Then she seemed quite desperate and finally blurted out the whole story. She had stolen the real vase, the thousand dollar one, herself.

She had been approached and paid for doing it by some men who picked up her acquaintance in moving picture houses. They had furnished her with a duplicate, and that was what had been in the cabinet ever since Mr. Briggs went away. She had the promise of a great deal more money and a ticket to San Francisco, but neither were forthcoming, and so she got an idea of having the vase somehow broken, in order to partially protect herself. Your friend's proposal to bring you to the house suggested to her mind an idea of making the rich actor responsible.

While we were talking, I could hear the honking of the autoes down in the street, and knew the family were back, big trunk, little trunk, and all. I opened the door and ran into the lower hall, telling the first person I met I must see Mrs. Briggs at once. She was in her own room and called to me kindly to come right in. Marie was stronger than I was; she pulled her hand away and disappeared. Needless to say, she has not been seen since. I know she had several hundred dollars in her possession and I believe she got to Canada before Mr. Briggs started the detectives. I will not repeat the sad story I told Mrs. Briggs. She was very angry, but she believed me, and so did Mr. Briggs. They kept me in the house until the next day, then Mr. Briggs, through secret police, somehow found the vase—the real vase—which had been taken to New York and there offered to a firm of art dealers. He recovered it without much trouble, and at the same time, the thieves were arrested. They had been guilty of many similar thefts, always getting the things through making love to some foolish servant girl. So Marie was only a victim, after all, and I guess Mr. Briggs was not sorry she had escaped.

My punishment was simply being turned off without a reference. Goodbye! I shall never meet you again, I suppose, but if ever you play in a theatre within my reach, be assured that in the audience on the

first night, eagerly listening and sadly remembering the one wonderful evening of her life, will be the girl whose real name is

RUTH CARTER."

Long looked up with a great relief in his smiling face.

"I knew it!" he exclaimed. "I knew it! I had faith in you all the time."

"Why not?" she faltered.

"Oh, Heins discovered the vase was a fraud. The china restorer told him so. He would have it then that you were an adventuress and had cooked up a plot to fleece us, some such as Marie's."

"Oh, how dreadful! Could you think that of me? But I suppose, after all, it did look queer. And now it's all over, and I'm so, so glad."

"Well, so's Heins, I guess. At one time we were near tossing up to decide who should send you a check, in the name of Mr. Warfield. You see, he said all the expenses of that evening were on him. And I get only twenty-five dollars a week."

This humiliating confession brought a look of admiration on the young girl's face.

"That's awful good pay—in Ashburnham!" she exclaimed. Then, blushing, "but it would take a lot of saving to make a thousand dollars from it. And you meant to do it for me?"

"Sure!" he returned heartily, adding, "let's get out of here. It's late and we've neither of us had any supper, I'm sure. So let's eat together, kiddo, and then, maybe, you'll let me try and be half as entertaining a theatre companion as Heins."

"Oh, please," she faltered, "don't mention his name again."

"I won't," he said eagerly, as if rather delighted at the removal of a possible obstacle to future peace of mind. Then he added, contritely, "Though I don't know as all the stones should be flung his way. I'm some penitent myself and willing to 'fess up. That is, if you think you can forgive me."

"My mother," whispered the girl, "used to remind me that my name came from the Good Book—Ruth. And there it's written, 'If ye would be forgiven, ye must first forgive.'"

"Good enough," he responded; "and my mother, when she read that story to me, used some other beautiful words, which I've not forgotten entirely. Something about 'Whither thou goest I will go—thy people shall be my people.' Say, I'd love to have you take me to Ashburnham."

But Ruth blushed so that he desisted from any more scriptural references, and suddenly switched the subject.

"By the way," he asked, "what was it you wanted when you came in here—to pop your watch?"

"It's not necessary now, is it?" she returned, raising her eyes in child-like faith.

"Well, I just guess 'tisn't," he cried, with hearty emphasis. "Nothing like that ever again for you. As you say, twenty-five per ain't such a rotten salary. It's good for a flat and delicatessen, and if I ever did have a hankering for art treasures it's cured by being almost obliged to buy a thousand dollar vase."

VOLUME TIGHTLY BOUND

Out of the Unknown

BY H. P. HOLT

ELLO," said Denton, the city editor, past a cigar into the telephone.

"Could you tell me what sized hat Mr. Abe Glover wears?" asked a voice.

"You're up the wrong street. This is a newspaper office," replied the city editor, hanging up the receiver with a jerk and turning again to the man at his side.

"Have all you fellows got mutton where your brains ought to be?" he said, continuing his conversation. "On a day like this, when there's absolutely nothing stirring, there is a chance for budding genius to flower. There are nearly eight million people in New York, all more or less human, and all piling skeletons into their cupboard. There must be pages full of good stories somew—"

Again the telephone rang.

"Hello," said the city editor.

"Could you tell me what sized hat Mr. Abe Glover wears?" asked the voice.

"Say, are you a gramophone record?" snapped the city editor. "How did you get back on this line? We've got a switch girl to protect us from freaks. Hello, switch."

"The young lady put me through to you at my request," said the voice. "I should be glad if you could answer my question."

Doubtless the wire would have been fused by purple language if the city editor had been busy, but he was not.

"What do you take us for? A public enquiry bureau, or a home for the mentally afflicted?"

"You make enquiries at your place, don't you?" the voice asked.

The city editor's teeth dug deeply into his cigar for an instant, and then his face relaxed. The position was not without a sort of humour.

"Well, we have been known to," Denton agreed, "but we're not doing much in the hat size line just now."

"I thought one of your men might take the trouble to ask while he is at Mr. Glover's house today," said the voice.

For the space of just two seconds the city editor remained dumb. There seemed so little that could be said. He was about to smash the receiver on again, when some instinct made him ask a further question.

"Which Mr. Glover are you talking about?" he said.

"Why, Abe Glover, of course."

"Do you mean the millionaire?"

"Sure. Your brains aren't very bright this afternoon. I want to know the size of the hat worn by the Mr. Abe Glover whose safe was cleaned out of jewels during the night."

It usually takes two railroad collisions and a royal assassination to make a city editor gasp, but Denton made an exception in this case. The information had come through upside down, and if Glover's jewels had gone

a fortune had changed hands. The city editor grew calm again after the first flush.

"That sounds like a big beat," he said into the instrument, "and I am sure we are very much obliged to you. Just hold the line a second."

He clapped his hand over the transmitter and turned to the man at his side.

"I've got a lost lunatic on this wire. Either he's fit for the madhouse or there's a providence watching over this office today. Fetch Curtis, quick. I expect I shall want both of you to tackle the story. Streak."

"Now," he added in a suave voice, into the telephone, "you were saying the safe at Abe Glover's house had been emptied. This is the first we have heard of it. The policeman on our beat doesn't seem to have got wind of it yet."

"He wouldn't," said the voice. "I can't quite see Mr. Glover telling the police in the circumstances, at my rate, for the present. I guess he'd rather take poison than let it get into the papers."

"Ah!" observed Denton grimly. His business was to thwart those who loved hiding their light under a bushel. "Did you hear exactly what had been stolen?"

"Bonds and diamonds chiefly, I believe," said the voice. "It was done thoroughly. There must be close on a hundred thousand dollars missing altogether."

The city editor's cigar had gone out, but he did not notice the fact. The news was converting him into a live wire. He turned to the two star reporters at his side and jabbed such facts as he had at them, adding a few instructions in staccato fashion.

"Don't forget to enquire about the size of Mr. Glover's hat, will you?" asked the voice, when the city editor turned his attention to the telephone again.

"Sure," replied Denton. "By the way, I'd be glad to have your name and anything else you know about this affair."

The line was as silent as the grave.

"Hell-o," cried Denton. "This crazy mortal can't have cut off," he added in a sulphurous undertone.

But the city editor was left guessing.

While the two sleuths were making tracks for the palatial residence of Mr. Abe Glover with a scandalous disregard for the speed limit, Denton got busy on the telephone again, and here he received a blow. Yes, Mr. Glover was in. It was Mr. Glover speaking. What? No, certainly not. His safe was perfectly intact, right under his very eyes, and if burglars came fooling around there they would get a hot reception.

On the face of things, the young cyclone that had burst in the office was panning out to nothing, and the city editor felt that he would like to hit somebody, but that was not the way he earned his living, so he sat tight, waiting for some tangible sign from his two sleuths. Twenty minutes passed and the city editor was beginning to wonder if news of any kind were going to break loose that day, when he heard Curtis cooing to him over the wire.

"It's a great yarn," said the reporter. "You can put the figure at a hundred thousand dollars easily, but don't die

of shock when you hear what it cost us to square the butler. Old Glover has given a definite promise that he will fire anyone in his household who lets a word of it—"

"Yes, I know," snapped the city editor. "Come on with the facts."

And then Curtis proceeded to unburden himself of the story. The city editor was comparatively happy for a while because not only was this a clear beat that had dropped out of the skies during the dullest day in months, but there were elements about it that lifted it far above the run of safe-breaking incidents. Besides, had not Abe Glover sat on the story and deliberately stated that there was not a word of truth in the report? Denton knew his Curtis. There was not a crime expert in the state whose judgment was sounder.

Only a few minutes after this, Mr. Glover narrowly escaped having an apoplectic fit when a paper was handed to him containing the news. The sum stolen was large, but he was a rich man. Indeed, he was colloquially said to be wallowing in wealth. He would willingly have sacrificed the money, however, rather than allow one tiny word of the affair to creep into the press, for Abe Glover was the sole proprietor of the establishment where the world-renouned Glover safes were manufactured, and the chief boast of the Glover safes was that they were utterly and eternally burglar proof. So it cannot be wondered at that Abe hated the idea of publicity.

Curtis had gone back to the office by the time trouble began to slip along the telephone wire.

"I'll put the law on you," bawled Abe at the city editor. "The whole thing's an infernal lie. If you don't come out with a contradiction in your next edition, I'll buy your little rag up and—and—"

"It isn't for sale, except at a cent a time, thanks, Mr. Glover," said Denton, perilously near wondering whether Curtis could really have slipped into some ghastly blunder.

"Who sprung this yarn on you?" fumed Abe.

"It's all over the city," replied Denton glibly. "As a matter of fact, every person in New York seems to think it his duty to ring us up and tell us all about it."

Abe did not answer instantly. He was wondering whether, by any chance, his own lawyer, the only person to whom he had told the galling truth, could have been so indiscreet as to repeat the facts. Perhaps one of the lawyer's clerks had blurted it out. These thoughts made him grow red at the wattles. Red murder was lurking in his eyes. He was torturing his brain for some sort of bluff that would work, but it was beyond him. Shouting and raving had proved utterly ineffective.

"You understand," he said, at length, in a deadly calm voice, "if that apology doesn't appear in your next edition you'll feel a legal earthquake at your office."

"Curtis," said Denton, when the conversation closed there abruptly, "either this is your last day here, or you're going to have your salary raised, but it's more than mortal man can say which. I wonder who that lunatic was who put us on to it?"

"Lunatic nothing," cried Curtis, as

an inspiration struck him. "I'll bet he never gave his name, or if he did give one it was a fake."

"Unreel it."

"It's as plain as the Statue of Liberty. Glover has two aspiring rivals in his field—Andrew Manning and the Manhattan Burglar-proof Safe Co. One of them has stumbled on the news and put us next to it because they knew it would stir their own trade up a bit. I'll bet a month's pay that is how it works out."

"Don't be rash, Curtis. You draw your salary for dealing in red hot facts, remember, and it is only in the fiction market that they can make their facts fit in with theories. Is there any clew up at the house?"

"Not so far."

"According to your story, the burglar took everything worth having except a valuable diamond necklace which belonged to Glover's daughter. How do you account for that?"

"It is peculiar," said Curtis, "but it looks as though he had a scare while he was gathering the things up. There's a romance attached to that. The necklace was given to Miss Glover by Count Bayleau who has been stopping as Abe's guest for some days. The Count is a French aristocrat, and Abe evidently thinks he has him roped in for the matrimonial stakes."

"Write it up, my son, write it up," urged the city editor. "You don't seem to realize that this is the only story we have today worth a cent. If Abe Glover is going to eat us for printing it, we may as well give him indigestion in the process."

Before the presses had been buzzing long, Glover's two rivals, greatly tickled by the joke, telephoned to the newspaper office for any unprinted trimmings to the story. The city editor played them cautiously, and after a while came to the conclusion that neither of them had been responsible for the news leaking out.

"I had a word with Mr. Glover just now," said the president of the Manhattan Burglar-proof Safe Co., "to tell him we felt sure he would be feeling sore, but the 'phone girl cut us off, saying that his language was damaging the electric current."

The afternoon was well advanced when the city editor heard a familiar voice over the wire and pricked up his ears. It was the lunatic speaking.

"Did you ask about that hat?" said the voice.

"Oh, yes. Six and seven-eights," replied the city editor at random. "But why did you want to know?"

"Well, you see, I've got somebody else's hat and lost one that is an old favourite of mine. I'd give a lot to get my own back. Got a sort of attachment for it, see?"

"And you thought you had changed it at Mr. Glover's place, eh?" Denton asked, intent only on being courteous to the obliging lunatic.

"I did think so at first. I put mine on the Glovers' hall stand while I was emptying the safe, but as he wears a six and seven-eights I suppose I must have changed it somewhere else, so I may find it after all."

"Curtis," said the city editor over his shoulder, in jerky fashion, "we'll have that story across three columns. There's an additional fact of some importance to add to it."

"I see," he added into the telephone.

"You wouldn't care to complete your kindness by giving me your name, I suppose?"

"Certainly," said the voice. "I've been known in New York for ten days as Count Bayleau, but the real Count is due to land here today, so I guess it's me for the simple life for a while."

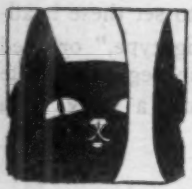
"A sentimental burglar, eh?" said Denton. "You couldn't bring yourself to take the diamond necklace you had given to the girl?"

"That's right, except that it is only a bum imitation," agreed the voice with a chuckle that trailed off into the unknown.

"Tell the printer to set these headlines in that new big type," ordered the city editor as he began to write furiously. "This isn't a story. It's a blooming classic."

A Face Peered In

BY WALTER BAIRD



I DID not like the looks of the clouds off in the southwest that afternoon my partner got ready to leave. Although a newcomer to the region, I knew something of the fierce hurricanes which occasionally came out of the gulf and went roaring over the land, tearing up jack generally.

"Jim, you'll get back as quick as you can?" I asked, as he mounted his horse.

"Sure Mike—I should get back sometime tomorrow evening. Don't worry about me."

When he had gone, I turned and reentered the shack, but found that a strange uneasiness possessed me. I tried to read, gave it up and came out and sat on the little gallery, smoking and watching the clouds.

Jim and I were trying to whip a thousand acres of mesquite schoolland into a ranch and we were finding it a tough piece of work. Payments to the state were ridiculously small (which is what first attracted us), but the hot winds had twice burned up our crops, and we had had the devil's own time getting water.

Having to make every edge cut, and needing every dollar we had, we seldom went to town, thirty miles distant, and when we did it was for supplies. That was Jim's mission the afternoon upon which my story opens, for we were out of almost everything.

But, somehow, I wished he had not gone, although I could not tell why. The Mexicans were quiet; there were no Indians near, and Jim knew far more of the southwest and its ways than I. He was a stayer, no matter how the marbles rolled, and had several times manifested his ability to take care of himself.

Still—I could not for the life of me shake off the feeling. It was not fear of the storm, it was not exactly fear for Jim—it was more like a presentiment of impending evil, insistent but dimly defined.

As night came on, I went inside and busied myself with the dinner dishes (we were not very good housekeepers), then I cooked and ate supper. After that, as it began to blow in strong, sudden puffs and to rain some, I shut all the doors, adjusted the light, and sat down and tried to read.

I don't know how long I held the book, turning its pages and finding them of small interest, but suddenly I felt that I had heard a sound. Yes, that's it, *felt* it—I really cannot say I heard anything. I sat still listening intently, but aside from the roar of the wind and the sharp rattle of the rain, I could detect nothing unusual.

I read on, then the light flared and I got up and looked into the lean-to kitchen. I was surprised to find the door wide open. I was sure I had closed it, and I glanced about by the dim light shed from the lamp in the front room. All seemed as usual so

I came back, read awhile, and then lay down on the bed in my clothes.

Try as I would, I could not sleep. Without, the storm increased in violence so I could feel the house shake. I began devoutly to wish my partner was there. I tossed and tumbled and must have dropped into a doze at last for the knock on my door came to my lulled senses loud as a thunder clap. I sprang up with a cry of "Who's there?" that was like the scream of a frightened woman.

"A friend," came the prompt answer from without, so, feeling foolish, I opened the door wide.

Upon the gallery, coatless and dripping wet, stood one of the most powerful men I have ever seen. He was big every way and towered like a giant in the doorway. I thought, at the time, he was the tallest man I had ever looked upon outside of a show, but I realized afterward that the flickering lamplight somewhat accentuated his height.

"I am very sorry to bother you, but I got caught out in this storm, lost my horse and coat, and will greatly appreciate it if you can put me up for the night."

His voice and manner, as well as his language, were well-bred and courteous so, feeling vastly relieved, I invited him in.

Once inside, I observed him more closely and saw that while his face was somewhat heavy, and his eyes very keen, his countenance was good.

"Some storm," I said, as I set a chair for him.

"Yes, indeed; a gift from the West Indies, I suppose."

Now, ordinarily, knowing my guest, I should have considered his drenched condition and the hour, and shown him at once to his bed, but I did not know this man and—well—try as I would, I could not disassociate him with the feeling I had had all the afternoon.

So we sat there and talked, talked of the climate, the soil, and its possibilities, and I found him remarkably well informed. Only once, when I mentioned the new forage, Sudan grass, did he seem at fault. He had never heard of it.

In view of the fact that he had just told me he was a native of the section, and had been all over the southwest, this struck me as singular for, while the grass was a new thing, it was well known in those parts owning to its great adaptability to dry and semi-arid climates. I thought I caught a quick, furtive glance from him as I manifested my surprise that he had not heard of it, and found myself wondering where and how he had lost his horse and coat, wondering if he had ever had a horse and coat. And just then a strange thing happened.

Jim and I had no dog, but we did keep a cat, a spotted, yellow little beast, that came to us one day and which we took in to bring us good luck. This cat had his bed in some old sacks under my bed and at this point he appeared, stretched, yawned prodigiously, and looked at the stranger out of slitted, yellow eyes.

"Ha! huh! ha! huh!" It was not a laugh, and it was not words, that came from my visitor's lips, but a kind of throaty note such as an idiot makes. He sprang up with an agility Tom, himself, might have displayed, and bounded into the kitchen. A moment

later, he reappeared, clutching a great, knotted club or bludgeon of green mesquite, which he brandished aloft, while his face revealed all the dark, cruel passions of a fiend's. In a moment I understood. I was shut in with a lunatic!

"Ha! huh!" Again that terrible sound as he took a step forward. Hardly realizing what I did, I caught up the cat and, as calmly as I could, sat down again in my chair.

"Cats make you nervous?" I asked, not knowing what else to say. I felt that a quick resort to the commonplace was my salvation and so it proved. For a full half minute he stood there, glaring horribly, then—

"Yes. I never could abide cats." He swept a hand uncertainly over his face—then he leaned his club against the wall and sat down.

"You'll have to pardon me, friend; I don't often have such spells." He laughed easily and naturally. "Had I known you had a cat, I should not have minded. I should have been prepared. As it was—"

"Oh, that's all right," I hastily interrupted; "they say, you know, that an elephant is mortally afraid of a mouse. You are a big man, yet you are startled by the sight of an animal no larger than a cat and—"

In the fear which possessed me, I was really talking against time, and wondering how I could get at my gun which I had foolishly left under my pillow. My line of talk almost proved to be my undoing for, when I mentioned that he was a big man, he stood up. "Yes," he said, "I am a big man, big and powerful, oh—*powerful!* Why, I could take a man like you and crush him to powder." He took a step toward me and stretched out his great arms, his fingers working like thick claws, while upon his face was a look that was not human.

"Tomorrow," I said desperately, "I shall take pleasure in showing you over the ranch. I should like very much to have you for a neighbor."

To my great relief, he sat down again. "Yes, tomorrow," he answered, and he shot me a look which said, as plainly as if he had spoken, that he was determined tomorrow should never come for me. I shuddered involuntarily.

"Cold?" he inquired, as courteously and as naturally as any well-disposed gentleman could have spoken, and when I assured him I was quite comfortable, he launched into a marvelously interesting account of the lands he had visited, of books he had read, and famous people he had met, displaying a culture and refinement that was amazing.

It was ghastly! As I listened, I got so nervous I could hardly sit still, but I instinctively knew the slightest move upon my part would rouse him to murderous frenzy, and that death, swift and horrible, would be my portion.

Over against the wall stood the great club. He had not deigned to refer to it or explain it. Yet he had gotten it out of my kitchen, had gone to it, swift and sure, when the cat appeared. I knew we had no such club about the place. I knew it had not been there when I ate supper. The open kitchen door was explained. I *had* closed it as I thought, so there was but one awful conclusion. The

crafty maniac sitting there talking so brilliantly had been inside the house some hours before he knocked upon the front door. What diabolical reason had he for remaining hidden when he had been inside before? Why had he left the club there and then gone away, only to ask admittance in a friendly, natural way, later? Why was he talking, talking, talking now?

Then the fearful thought suddenly came to me. This man was following out some set plan which had taken hold upon his disordered brain. That it was a bizarre, inhuman plan, of which I was to be the victim, I knew to a certainty, but, somehow, the thought gave me hope. I felt that, barring some unfortunate circumstance which would precipitate matters or throw him off, I was safe for a time, at least, if only I could keep him talking, so I urged him on and held tight to the cat.

Over and over again, as he talked, I cursed the day that cat had ever come to the shack, and taxed my brain for some means whereby I could get hold of my gun. I dared not get up and go to bed. I dared not go to the door and put the cat out. In either case, I should be compelled to turn my back upon him and I instinctively knew he would be upon me in a flash. A cold sweat came out all over me and still he talked.

Then the cat grew restless and, gradually, I noted a change in his manner and a fear that turned me sick settled around my heart which beat thickly. He seemed to be getting impatient for something. Then I saw a crafty look come into his face and he stopped abruptly.

"Isn't it about time we turned in?" he asked politely. "When I get started talking I never know when to stop. I hope I have not bored you."

Bored me! Merciful God! I hope never again to go through such a night! With all the will I could command to keep my voice steady, lest he suspect that I understood, I answered, "I have seldom enjoyed an evening so much. Your bed is right there by the wall."

Then I stood up, feeling that I was standing upon a contact mine, and watched him until he lay stretched at full length. I noticed that he made no attempt to remove any part of his wet clothing.

I dared not put out the light, but I did turn it down slightly, fearing to arouse his suspicions if I left it burning full blast for I saw that he was furtively watching me. When I sought my own bed, I sidled to it as much as I could without making the movement appear intentional. The cat, I took to bed with me, not daring to let go of it, and never will I forget the sense of relief which came over me when I dropped my head upon my pillow under which I knew my automatic lay. But how to get to it! I knew I must reach it and do it quickly, and I knew that when I did shoot I must do more than merely kill him—I must kill him so he could never move off his bed. A shot through the lungs or abdomen would permit him, maniac that he was, to beat me to a jelly with his great club over against the wall, or to strangle the life out of me with his great hands. I knew, also, that to get the drop on him would be of no more avail than it would be to get the drop on a charging wild beast.

He would heed it only to spring at me and then I might miss.

As naturally as I could, I threw my arm over in front of my face, letting my hand fall near the lower edge of the pillow. Then, slowly, the fraction of an inch at a time, I slid my hand beneath. *The gun was gone!*

"Gone! So the man watching me had been in this room, too, while I was outside. Horrors! I was alone and unarmed with a madman nearly twice my size, who craftily planned, even now, to kill me, kill me horribly, before morning! I felt like a trapped rat. And what if I had attempted to snatch my pistol and begin shooting as I had at first planned! The thought almost caused my heart to stop altogether.

I am not exactly a coward, under ordinary circumstances, but there was an uncanny quality about this danger which took all the nerve out of me and left me limp and weak. The great club, throwing its shadow back against the wall, seemed the weapon of an ogre. I both felt and saw the cunning eyes of the man watching my every move. In spite of myself I groaned aloud—then I let the cat slip out of my arms to the floor!

"Ha! huh! ha! huh!" The lunatic was on his feet in an instant, his terrible cry resounding with demoniacal distinctness through the room. I screamed in terror and tried to get to his club, but he easily beat me to it and in another moment had brandished it aloft!

Outside, the storm, as if in accord, beat down with redoubled force and the blast sent up a wail that was like that of a lost soul.

Shivering, cowering, transfixed by the awful fate about to overtake me, I covered my face with my hands and waited.

Thud! crash! "Ha! huh! ha! huh!" two terrible blows resounded upon the floor, shaking the shack to its foundations. I leaped backward with a cry and uncovered my eyes. Crouched over, his face distorted, his eyes gleaming like fire, the lunatic was beating the cat to a pulp!

"Fool!" I shrieked at myself, for I hardly knew what I was doing, but I did realize that I had wasted a precious moment, a moment that would probably cost me my life. I sprang to the door, but before I could reach it, he was upon me.

I have known many powerful men, but I have never felt such strength as the madman laid upon me. He clutched my shoulders and literally hurled me back from the door through the air. And then, as if I had been a baby, he swept me to the floor and knelt, one big knee upon my chest, and raised his claw-like hands above my face.

Fiendish, unreal, hideously fanciful, it all seemed as I saw his lips snarl back from his teeth which he gnashed constantly, click! click! uttering his terrible cry at intervals and grimacing horribly.

"I shall—yes, I shall eat you, little man. With these teeth," click! click! "I shall eat you!"

I struggled desperately, but I might just as well have tried to move a brick wall as combat the unnatural strength I opposed. He ogled and winked, he twisted his big face into hideous smirks and fiendish snarls, he uttered

his throaty cry and opened and closed his great mouth and steadily, surely, he bent his head closer and closer and his hands hovered about my throat! Sick with horror, I did the only thing I could do, I turned my face to one side and saw, leering in at the window, another face which, that moment, appeared to be an exact counterpart of that of the man bending above me.

"Oh, look, for God sake, look!"

The cry came from my lips involuntarily and it was a cry of pure terror, since I had no thought of calling the madman's attention to what I saw, but the effect upon him was remarkable as well as unexpected.

With a cry, he left me and bounded, club in hand, to the door, and as he went, I saw the face outside fairly glow with terrible eagerness. If ever a human face expressed anger and hate unutterable, the face outside did. But I should not speak of it as a human face. It was a man's face, it is true, a big man's big face, but it was not human.

Shaken so I could scarcely stand, when I was again upon my feet, I got up. Outside arose a hideous, terrible clatter of fierce cries, fiendish laughter and the sickening thud of heavy blows.

The rain had by this time stopped and the wind had swept the sky free of clouds so that a pale moon showed. I went to the window and looked out, and such a spectacle! Two men, giant men, crazy men, each armed with a gigantic club, were waging a titan-like battle. It was the most terrible, as well as the most fascinating struggle any man ever witnessed, I feel quite sure. They threshed and heaved and hewed at each other, and parried blows with remarkable skill and precision. And there was present a wild abandon that showed how much they were enjoying the conflict. If one went down, he was up before the other could finish him, and all the while sounded their awful voices which reflected the chaos of their mad brains!

I knew I should at once seize this opportunity to be off and away to safety. I knew that one or the other of them must soon prevail and that then the terrible victor would come for me but, somehow, I could not leave. I went out on the gallery to get a better view, after first securing the only weapon I could think of, a butcher knife, and stood there watching.

Once, as by common consent, they dropped their clubs and went at each other with their hands, clawing, pummeling, and striking, then whirling round and round like two gorillas locked in a death embrace.

I thought this would be the finish, and was just preparing to leave when they sprang apart again and with fierce, angry cries, caught up their clubs and went at it like warriors of old.

And right there they did a peculiar thing. It seemed that in recovering their clubs they got them mixed. How they knew them apart I know not, for they appeared to be about the same, and the light was poor, but some way the poor, driven devils knew. They leaped forward, hesitated, seemed at fault, then quickly exchanged clubs and backed away only to come together again with a dull shock.

By and by, they began to weaken.

The blows became fewer and slower, and finally, one of them dropped his club and when he clinched his antagonist, the other dropped his also. I left the shack then and hurried away when I saw them fall together, a moment later, and roll on the ground locked in a terrible, deadly embrace, for I could stand no more.

At first I walked slowly, hearing, fainter and fainter, their wild, discordant cries, then an unreasoning terror seized me and I broke into a run that soon became a panic. I soon reached an uncleared portion of the ranch and whenever a briar clutched me or a mesquite bough brushed me, I gave a yell like an Indian. If ever a sane man was crazy, I was that man when, at last, I crouched, trembling like an aspen-leaf, in a dense clump of mesquite. Hour after hour, I crouched there, every faculty awake, fearing to peer out, yet fearing not to lest the grisly danger creep upon me unawares.

I finally managed to get control of myself and then I remembered that Jim might get back early and ride into the terrible danger before he realized its presence. I didn't want to go in any direction but away from there as far as I could get, and then some, but I could not forsake my partner so I began, slowly and fearfully, to creep back.

There was a long, deep gully, fringed with bushes and long grass, which ran almost up to the house from the south. I got into it and then I crept forward stealthily, listening every few moments, and keeping a sharp eye out. The sun was high when at last I approached the scene of conflict and carefully reconnoitered. There they were, motionless in the sun, still locked together as when I had last seen them. I left the gully and went forward warily, but I knew they were dead before I reached them.

Such faces! They no longer resembled anything human, so swollen and bloody and blackened were they, and twisted into indescribable horrors. The sight turned me sick, so I hastily went to the shack and brought an old wagon cover which I spread over them. Then I tried to eat breakfast but could not.

All that day I started nervously at every sound as I kept a sharp outlook, but I saw nothing, and along about four o'clock Jim rode in.

I was never so glad to see anyone in my life before and I told him so in a voice that trembled as I talked.

He eyed me queerly.

"I have been somewhat anxious about you, pal," he said. "Two days ago the lunies in the county asylum broke free, killed a couple of attendants, and raised cain generally. The whole town is half crazy itself over it. They caught all but two, but they are the worst. They, it seems, were the ringleaders and if what is said of them is true, they are especially well qualified for the job. They are known as the "Big Demons," and they are twin brothers, both giants, and both incurable, dangerous lunatics, who were kept in the bad ward. At one time they were both educated, brilliant men, but something put them crazy and they say they hate each other with a hatred that would be fantastic were it not so pitiful. The officers are out scouring the country for them."

"Then they needn't look any further," I said, "they're here."

"Here!" I saw Jim's face blanch as he made a move toward his gun.

"Yes, here, what's left of them," and I led the way to where the poor devils lay. Then I described my experience as best I could for I was almost in a nervous collapse.

"Lucky I brought you a little drink," said Jim, the horror of my recital showing in his face and manner as he produced a bottle. "That was the narrowest squeak I ever heard of!"

"Yes," I replied grimly, "there was nothing monotonous about it."

Late that evening, two officials from the institution drove up in a wagon and we gladly turned the wretched bodies over to them. We had no use for such property.

My pistol I found pounded to pieces on a rock a mile from the house and as for the poor cat—well, I have never fully decided whether he played the part of a friend or an enemy.

The Morning Only Girl

BY LEO NOBLE BURNETT

ONE morning she was whistling, ever so lightly, the chorus of a merry ragtime, popular two seasons ago, with her lips screwed up devilishly, her eyes sparkling merrily.

Oliver McNabb hadn't noticed her the first morning—nor the second. On the third morning, however, a bulging spring morning, a glimpse of her black eyes and spatter of freckles as she brushed by had caused him to single her out.

Her lacy white waist, picked up for fifty-nine cents somewhere, but which he regarded as a creation of real niftiness; her patent-leather shoes, criminally out of style, but which appealed to him as pert; and her independent nose, not snobbish, but just properly independent—these were all noticed in their turn; from the country, perhaps.

McNabb was from the country, but more than two years in the city's howling mart had given him no little urbane ease and perspicacity. He was twenty-five and intended to make something of himself. He was employed in a pipe-organ factory.

To whatever heights Oliver's tendrils of aspiration may have climbed, he had to punch the time-clock at the shop entrance not later than seven-thirty every morning except Sunday. On his way to work he passed daily through the square in front of the city hall. To arrive at the factory on time, he had learned from experience that it was necessary to leave the park by seven.

At this hour many were hurrying to their various places of employment. Suddenly the girl had floated into the stream. Others of her sex who rushed by at this hour tended to be bent and hardened. Her wholesome freshness stood out; and her appearance in the same place every morning naturally impressed an impressionable young man.

She walked rapidly and looked straight ahead. But young McNabb, there is no use denying, was more debonair than the others. Youth is susceptible and the girl was not old. Thus, at the end of a few weeks, she nodded slightly when he raised his hat. No harm in that, surely.

Sometimes one would be a trifle late and their paths would cross at one side of the park or the other. Usually, however, the first heavy thud of seven would sound from the city hall clock when they passed the ornate fountain which marked the very center of the square. Both recognized that to meet at this exact spot was a mark of punctiliousness. Once, when McNabb was almost out of the park (and he walked slowly fearing she might not come at all), he met her almost running at the edge of the square farthest from her destination. He supplemented the raising of his hat with a remark:

"Late today, aren't you?"

She laughed genially. "You just wait. I'll make up for it tomorrow," were the words he caught.

So, on the next morning, he delayed purposely and let her meet him just as he entered the square.

She raised a finger in good-natured reproval. "There, didn't I tell you?" she chided him.

It was easy after that. Now and then he would add a scrap to his knowledge of her. She said her name was Sara—Sara Hatch. Yes, from the country, and proud of it. Where did she work? Oh, very well, if he had to know,—in a laundry office. Helped to keep books and took in packages of dirty clothes. Assured this man that he could have his shirts by tonight and that woman that her —her—laundry would be ready by tomorrow. She refused to give her address.

He didn't press her. They accepted it as an early morning acquaintanceship. It was different and refreshing. They both caught the humor and peculiar romance of it.

But this relation, this friendship, was like all others in that such things are never stationary. Sunny, harmless amities have to be poked ahead continually by the relentless God of Perpetual Change.

Oliver took on a striped bow tie. There were many things which crept into his toilette that might have been omitted without sacrificing respectability.

Gradually, quietly, this seventh hour caprice, which the sophisticated Oliver regarded lightly at first, came to be a thing of his life. He actually found himself looking forward from one morning to the next. He believed that the big things in life are gained by taking chances; so he gambled one morning when they met at the fountain.

"Would you come a few minutes early tomorrow?"

She came!

It was a summer morning of splashing brightness. They sat on a green bench close to the walk opposite the fountain. They had never sat together before. It thrust them into a different relation. They became aware that they were sitting here in the park, chatting commonplaces at a ridiculously early hour, for the sole and obvious purpose of enjoying the company of each other.

Sara was no blusher, but she found herself fighting a blush. And the blush won by big odds. McNabb didn't notice, however; his own nervous ecstacy demanded too much attention. If he had held her panting in his arms on a palmed balcony by moonlight, he could not have experienced a wilder delight than he did experience in this boundless license of having her here on the same green seat with him—unperfumed freshness —black, black hair—a girl—

The clock boomed the first stroke of seven. "Pshaw!"

They hurried away.

It was more natural the next morning. The naturalness increased. It became a happy little creed. The fountain was the shrine, seven the hour. He tried to wring from her permission to see her at night. Dance? No? She liked shows didn't she?

Her eagerness was obvious, but her

refusal was uncompromising. A morning affair, she decreed. He complied graciously. Sometimes they had but a few seconds together, sometimes a few minutes, occasionally a quarter of an hour—never longer than that.

It was past seven when they broke away on a few mornings, making them both late. Perhaps that was the reason. Perhaps it was the fiendish ogre, Hard Times, which laughed an impish laugh into the laundry and pipe organ businesses. Whatever it was, Oliver McNabb suddenly found his job hanging on a thread. The thread didn't hold. All in a day he was whisked from Employed to Unemployed.

Sara Hatch was a good office girl. She was as successful as anyone the laundry ever had in convincing a flustered gentleman who wore size 16 collars that he could easily adapt his neck to the 14½ size which came in his package. Nevertheless, in the latter part of the summer, the laundry management saw fit to reduce its office force. Sara had to go!

That night she dropped a tear or two over a plate of sallow cornbeef hash in a hopeless restaurant where even the flies had a discouraged way about them.

The girl's tragedy occurred a week following Oliver's. During that week he had continued to make his morning trips at the usual time without apprising Sara of his discharge. He assumed that another job would be available immediately. At the end of a week, however, the gravity of the situation dawned upon him.

They were both duly serious when they met at the fountain at ten minutes to seven. Both had been job-hunting.

"Are all of those people out of jobs?" she asked, indicating the prostrate forms of wretches scattered about beneath the park's maples. Some had slept there all night and presented weird contortions. Others lay flat with arms outstretched like the groaning wounded of a battlefield. Some were getting up lamely and crawling away to suffer the heat of August in another place.

"All out of jobs," he assured her.

McNabb had one hand in a coat pocket and twisted his finger about a newspaper clipping which called for a "strong, bright, earnest, willing, able-bodied young man with good habits, who could play a trombone, to work in a paint shop." He could coax a few notes from a harmonica, but was sure that a trombone was beyond him.

"One must have experience to get a job, I suppose," she platitudinized.

"And experience to get a job," he supplied.

Sara fussed with her handbag which contained a want ad clipping, asking for a woman with a thirty-eight bust measure to act as a demonstrator. Sara was but a thirty-six. No, it could never be done.

The clock struck seven.

She must hurry, she said. Mr. Gruensfelder couldn't stand it to have his employes late. Discharged a girl in the mangling department yesterday for that very thing. Lovely man to work for, but such a temper sometimes!

He must hurry too. "Mr. Himmelblau—"

But she was away.

She went two blocks beyond the

park and circled back to her rooming-place. She lay flat on her back on the sagging cot and heard Mrs. Riley yell across the alley to a neighbor, that she was going to have cabbage for dinner.

Oliver also detoured. He bought a newspaper and sat on the front porch of his roominghouse studying it until the Old Lady came out to scrub and drove him away. It was just the incentive he needed.

WANTED—Men to fill thousands of easy jobs. $85 to $250 a month for the right parties.

A correspondence school.

WANTED—Active young man with good appearance for selling. Must be a hustler. A. NO. 1 line.

Gas irons.

WANTED—Men to learn the barber's trade. The world needs more barbers.

It offered no immediate remuneration. Anyway, it didn't appeal.

WANTED—Bright young man as a bread-wagon driver. Must speak three languages.

He passed this one up at the start. He tried them all, day after day. But there were six columns of "SITUATIONS WANTED," and a scraggly half-column of "HELP WANTED—MALE." There was a waiting list in the few cases where he might qualify.

"Name and address, please. You'll be notified when your turn comes. Oh, yes, pretty long list." With that, an officious secretary would call the interview to a peremptory conclusion.

Sara's experiences were similar. It was interesting to read that an aigrette had been lost between Wabash and Sixteenth on the evening of the twenty-first; and that a graduate masseuse in Swedish massage and medical gymnastics desired a position, but it did not help her.

And she needed help!

If she had only been black, or Japanese, or a lady chauffeur, or a middle-aged widow, or a manicurist and chiropodist with a following! According to the want ads her services would have been in immediate demand if she but had any of these qualifications.

Once she obtained a position as a pastry cook. Now it was this way: Sara was an estimable girl; her disposition was beyond reproach; her character was undefiled; she could bake bread; but pastry—*no!*

Morning after morning, the girl appeared in the park, her handbag stuffed with clippings.

Morning after morning, Oliver met her there, want ads in every pocket.

Sara was not naturally deceptive, but she wanted McNabb to think she was getting on. She told him that she had been promoted to head girl at the office. A day or two later, Oliver, not wishing to be excelled, announced that the company had taken him in from the shop and given him a desk in the sales office.

Sara's skirt (and she had but one) was growing shiny. Her straw hat was becoming dreadfully unseasonable. Continued washings had revealed that her fifty-nine cent waist was a fifty-nine cent waist. Nor were Oliver's trousers in the best possible state of preservation.

It was the last of August. It was the middle of September. It was the latter part of September. The days grew alarmingly short. People hur-

ried more rapidly. The stores were showing overcoats and furs. Thanksgiving was suggested and Christmas was intimated. Every day the family of the unemployed took in more members.

Now and then, Oliver and the girl would get a job for a day or two, but when October stared from the calendar, Oliver's savings had dwindled down to a few dollars and Sara could pay room rent for but one week more. The city which had thrilled her, sickened and frightened her as the mercury went down. Oliver had a thought or two of the country himself. As a last resort he could go back.

It was a morning of penetrating chill, one of those fall mornings on which rain would have been colder than snow. A wind caught up some dry leaves from the dull brown lawn of the park and scraped them across the cement walk where some stuck in a rift at the edge of the fountain. People scurried along with their heads bent. Few wore overcoats. They looked worried. They were worried. McNabb came five minutes early. He half intended to confess this morning that he had been coming at seven all of this time just for her. He knew that she would admire him for it. He wondered just how she would express her sentiments when she learned that he had been making sacrifices all along. He would tell her he was going away—to the country—that he would remember her—that sometime perhaps—It struck seven. The last quaver of the seventh stroke evaporated. Where was Sara? Had *she* lost her position?

Then, far down the walk, he saw her coming. As she came nearer and nearer it seemed, somehow, that she was changed. He hadn't noticed it so much until now. He recalled how she looked those spring mornings. Today she was stooped or smaller, or something. Poor girl! she ought not to work in a laundry. The morning was so gray and he was so huddled that she didn't notice him at first. Several feet away he could see the intense paleness of her face, the face once so fresh and freckled. Dark tracings beneath her eyes intensified the whiteness.

She smiled when she saw him. "Oh, you waited! I was so late I thought perhaps you went on. I hope I haven't made you late." She glanced up at the clock. "It's lots after seven, isn't it? If you don't mind, I'll hurry right along. You had better hustle, too. I do hope I haven't made you late at the factory."

Her departing smile had a seriousness about it which he was able to appreciate—two hours later.

He walked to the river front. Two large pleasure crafts stood deserted at the dock. The water lapped cold and hard about the piers. He took some worn clippings from his pocket. Here was a place he would like to fill, although he couldn't answer all of the requirements; but he had tried everything else, absolutely everything. He would take a chance and get turned down again.

A two-mile walk brought him to a pleasant modern residence. He rang the bell. It was answered by an oldish lady. Did someone at this address advertise for help?

The woman assured him he was at the right place. She admitted him in-

to the hall. "Wait here a moment," she directed. "My husband is busy with someone just now, but he will see you presently." She left him sitting on the hall seat. "A young man waiting to see you, Will," he heard her say as she passed through the next room.

The door opening into the front room from the hallway was ajar. There were two voices—a man's and a girl's.

Man: "No, it isn't large, but you could never manage. And it would be lonesome for you. I wouldn't feel right if I let you have it."

Girl: "But I am very willing, sir. I love that kind of work and have always done it. I know I could manage as well as a man."

Oliver thought he recognized the tones. His eyes wide with partial understanding, he leaned forward to catch every syllable.

Masculine Voice's negative to the girl's plea was firm.

The door opened.

"Sara!"

She uttered a little scream. "And you, too—you—you—"

They both saw that politeness should precede dramatics. McNabb told her to wait for him outside. She assented.

McNabb went into the front room with the man. When he came out at the end of a few minutes he was smiling. His gray eyes were blue.

"I believe you can manage, Mr. McNabb," said the man. "If you will return tomorrow—er—at this same time, let us say, we can arrange the details. It's a fine place and I think you will like it. I was sorry for your young friend, but it would have been a great deal too much for the child. Good morning, Mr. McNabb."

She was waiting at the foot of the porch steps. They said nothing until they passed the hedge and were in the street.

Sara held her handkerchief to her face. "I didn't mean anything wrong when I lied that way every morning," she managed to say. "But you were the only friend I had, and I did so hate to lose you. It was all a lie, the promotion and everything. I—I have not had a job for seven weeks!" She removed her handkerchief. Her eyes and nose were a bit red.

"But I lied, too," he was saying; "I haven't had a job either; and I wanted to see you. All of the time I kept thinking I would get another place. I thought—well, let's forget that now because now I have a place. I just got one—back there."

She looked in amazement.

"You—got—that—place? You mean you are—" Her eyes grew bright and angry and dry. "That spoils it so. You weren't fair with me or with *her!*"

He laughed. "Listen. You don't understand. I *lied* to that man. I am not what you think I am—not yet. But I hope to be. And Miss—Miss—Sara, it's all up to you."

Anger surrendered to confusion. Understanding came a-creeping.

Somewhere, faintly but clearly, a clock was striking.

They both heard.

"It's sev—it's nine o'clock," he said. "Before it stops striking you must say that I can make good the lie I told to get this job, this wonderful job."

Five—six—seven—

Sara's unblushable face was furious with blushing. Her independent nose was funny it was so pink from crying.

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Nine," concluded the clock.

He took her arm as they walked along and held her as close as propriety permitted; in fact, he strained propriety a bit.

From his pocket he took the worn clipping. They read it together:

WANTED—Young married couple to care for house and small farm in suburb.

Winning Dad

BY ALMA M. HONEY

IF there's one thing my Dad loves it's engines—engines of all kinds, but especially railroad engines; and if there's one thing he hates it's lords and dukes and earls. So when I met Lord Roger at the Bradbury's dinner and again at Gladys Hill's coming-out party, and again at Mrs. J. Clarke Bisby's ball and two or three more times besides, and began to like him, I got anxious about how I should win over Dad.

You see, my lord wanted to call and I began to realize what that might mean in the end, and in view of the fact that Dad had vowed no daughter of his should ever marry a titled foreigner, it's no wonder I was anxious.

Dad always likes to see me dressed up, so one night—the night before he went on his hunting trip to Maine—I dressed up in my new white satin and pearls with a long train and swept in grand style into the library where he was reading about engines. I trailed by him two or three times and coughed, and at last I had to sit up on the table right in his light before he noticed. Then he looked up and scowled at me over his glasses.

"Oh!" he said and smiled, because he's always pleased when I have on a new dress, even though it costs a fortune. That's the only way Dad likes to splurge with his money. "Another new dress, eh? Well, stand off and let me have a look at you."

I stood off and switched around and trailed up and down in front of him just as the models do in the Paris shops, you know.

"Um!" he said thoughtfully. "You look like—well—like an Easter Lily, Letty. Your hair is very golden tonight and your lips are very red. Nothing on 'em? Sure? Come here till I see."

Dad is never satisfied that I haven't paint on my lips till I let him nearly rub the skin off.

"Your eyes are getting browner every day, too. Yes sir! You're a pretty girl all right, Letitia—a mighty pretty girl. I'm proud of you."

"Pretty when I'm dressed up, Dad?"

"No, blame it." (Dad always says 'blame it' at home because I object to 'damn it.' He says 'damn it' in the office.) "No, blame it! You're pretty all the time."

Is it any wonder that Edith says I am a little bit vain?

"How much did this one cost, Letitia?" he asked finally, settling back in his chair.

I told him.

"Great Cæsar's Ghost!" he sighed, and fell silent with his eyes half shut, taking in all the points of my gown. I knew he was figuring out how many smoke-stacks, or engine bells, or pounds of pig iron the price of the gown would buy. Dad always reduces my gown to the common denominator of engine parts. Imagine a white

satin gown being figured into nasty, black, greasy engine parts. But Dad will do it. I suppose it's because he's an engine man and made his fortune that way.

"What's that thing that follows you about like your shadow?" he asked. "Is it a trail or a train? I forget."

"A train, of course," I said disgustedly. Say, aren't men funny though? "A trail is—why, it's a path in the woods that the Indians used to follow, isn't it?"

He nodded. "Like the Indians, I'll be hitting the trail early tomorrow before you're up, so you'd better say good-bye to me to-night. I'll be in the Maine woods this time tomorrow."

I hung my head and toyed with my fan. Then I went over and sat down on the arm of a big chair on the other side of the table. I really didn't know how to broach the subject of Lord Roger.

"Dad—" I said and stopped. He had gone back to his old engine book again. "Dad!"

"Well?" he inquired without looking up.

"Dad, last-week-at-the-Bradbury's-I met-a-lord-and-we-like-each-other-and-he-wants-to-call-and-and—can—may—he?" I ran my words together and finished in a weak little voice because Dad's blue eyes were boring right through me.

"I wish you wouldn't talk so fast, Letty," he said pettishly.

Then, as the import of what I had said began to come to him (I suppose he caught the echo on the rebound) he started in in a louder voice.

"No, the lord or whatever he is, can't call, Letty, and you know that. No daughter of mine shall ever marry a nobleman and I guess you've heard me say that about five thousand times, haven't you?" He got up and began to pace up and down the room. "Haven't you?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir, about five thousand," I answered in a small voice.

"Confound these foreigners!" he went on in a still louder voice, until I thought the policeman on the beat would be in. "Da—— blame them I say! If I had my way, I'd pass a law prohibiting all these confounded dukes and lords and earls coming over here wife-hunting. Why, he's only after your money, girl—that's all. Can't you see that? They don't any of them know how to do anything but to simper at you and ogle you through a round glass stuck in the corner of their eyes. Oh! don't tell me! I know, I tell you. No, Ma'am, he can't call and that settles it!"

Just then Carl and Edith called for me to go to the opera. I don't know where Dad would have landed if they hadn't come in. I never saw anyone who could raise such a row over such a little thing. A title is to my Dad what a red rag is to a bull.

"You might have known, Letitia," my sister Ede said when I cried in the carriage on my way to the theatre. "You meet Lord Roger all you want outside and let Dad go whistle."

Dad went hunting next day and I didn't even say good-bye to him; I was too mad. I hoped he wouldn't get even so much as a rabbit and I tacked that on to my prayers every night while he was away.

Bad prayers, I guess, are never answered. Mine weren't anyway, for

Dad had great luck and came back a week later in the best of spirits and with all kinds of animals. The only kinds he didn't have were a lion and a kangaroo and such jungle specimens. I met him at breakfast the morning after his return and he showed plainly that he hadn't forgotten our little tiff because he acted rather embarrassed. You know the way people do—talk a lot about nothing to cover up awkward pauses? I was laughing in my sleeve at him all the time; he tried so hard to avoid the subject of my lord or anything that might lead to it.

"Ah—by the way, Susum Jane," said Dad, when he was getting up from the table. You know Dad always calls me Susum Jane when he wants to be real agreeable and kittenish. He always called my brother Charley 'Stick-in-the-mud' too, until he married poor little frivolous Lo Lo of a third rate Merry Widow company, and since then he's very stiff with him and always calls him Charles. I think it's mean, too, because Charley couldn't help it if he fell in love with Lo Lo. Could he? And even if Lo Lo is quite a lot older than my brother you can't blame her either, because she really did need a home awfully bad.

"Ah! by the way," Dad repeated and cleared his throat two or three times, "I met a very fine young fellow on my trip. I was with him for nearly a week. We had a great time together hunting and talking engines, and he knows a heap about them, too. A mighty bright young man! Name's Faulkner. A good old-fashioned American name—that! I like it. He's just out of tech school and is looking for some sort of an opening. I'm thinking about taking him into the office. We need men like him in our business. I've rarely seen anyone so interested in engines. Why, he'd ask questions and let me talk about them all night if I wanted to."

"Oh, Dad!" I had to laugh. "The poor fellow! I'll bet he had a peach of a time on his hunting trip."

"You're not a man," said my Dad. "You don't understand engines."

"No, thank goodness!" said I fervently. "So you're to take this man Faulkner into the office? And then when he gets things learned pretty well you'll expect him to marry your daughter I suppose."

Dad looked a little sheepish. "Well, I sort of thought you might get to liking him, Letty."

"Well, I won't," I said decidedly, "and that settles it, Dad. What right have you to go about thinking who I'll like, anyway? If I can't marry Lord Roger, I won't marry anyone."

Dad came over near me and looked mysterious. "Say, Letitia, I wish you'd quit thinking about that scamp. I hate to tell you, but he seems to be a fake. I've had him looked up lately on the quiet and he's disappeared off the face of the earth. Got scared and sneaked out of town."

"He did not," I cried indignantly. "So you've looked him up, have you?" scornfully. "Well, I'd like to know what right—"

"Ain't I your father, miss?" stormed Dad, forgetting his grammar that he'd been at so much pains and money to pick up.

"I don't care if you are. Lord Roger has not sneaked anywhere, for he isn't the sneaking kind."

"Oh! he isn't, ha? Then where is he? Tell me that!"

"I won't," I said sulkily. "And I'm bound and determined now to marry a title. I give you fair warning. I'll marry a title anyway, now, if it's only a doctor."

"A doctor, ha? Horse, regular or teeth?" said Dad sarcastically. "Well, wherever Lord Roger is I'm glad he's beat it and I hope he'll stay beat. Good-bye!" And he slammed out of the room.

Revenge is sweet but inconvenient. I sulked in my room for two days when Dad was around. I wouldn't even speak to him. He had his Mr. Faulkner up two nights in succession, so I learned from Mary, and they talked engines and read engines until one in the morning both nights. I expect they'd have eaten and smoked them if they could have. I knew Dad was dying to have me meet him, but I wouldn't. It was rather a punishment for me, too, for I was always curious about new men.

Well, Dad took the fellow into his office and under his wing, and he made progress. Dad said he'd never met such a brilliant young man; he was wild about him. He had him to dinner whenever I was to be away; he didn't dare invite him when I was to be at home for fear I would not speak to his friend. They played cards and chess together; they talked engines together; they went to machinery exhibits and sometimes to the theatre, but Dad is not awfully keen on the theatre. Lo Lo, Charlie's wife, began to be anxious for fear Dad might give Faulkner Charlie's share of the fortune and even Ede began to show signs of the same uneasiness. As for me, I didn't care much. I saw Lord Roger quite often, away from home always, when Dad didn't know it, and he and I were trying our best to devise some scheme whereby we could win Dad over to our way to thinking.

"I think I'll have to save your life, don't you know?" said Lord Roger one day. "That's the only way I can think of."

"But really, my life is perfectly safe, dear. I don't see how you can save it."

"That's so," he laughed. "I hadn't thought of that."

"I'll tell you," he said suddenly, and stood up and squared his shoulders, "I'm going to walk right up to your house tomorrow night and ask your father for you. How'll that be?"

"That'll be fine, but of course he'll say no."

"Think so?"

"Think so, Roger? I know it. Goodness! It's easy to see you don't know my Dad. He's got a perfectly awful temper."

"You—you don't s'pose he'll throw me out or anything like that, do you?"

"I'm quite sure he'll try."

"Then," said Lord Roger, "I most certainly shall go, sweetheart, for maybe that's the best way to settle this matter, after all. Perhaps I'll have to carry you off by force like the cavemen used to if I can't make your father listen to reason."

The next night at dinner Dad was preoccupied. He did not talk at all and ate everything as though he did not taste or enjoy it.

"Not feeling well, Dad?"

"Sh! Yes; feel fine. Trying to

dig out a problem. Don't talk! Let me think. Faulkner and I have been working on it all day. He's coming tonight to work some more."

"Oh!" I said, and smiled. "That'll be two problems you'll have to work out tonight. You'll have some busy evening, I think."

But Dad was so deep in thought that he didn't notice. He had his napkin tucked into his collar; his face was red with the exertion of thinking and he was eating his salad with a spoon.

I felt pretty nervous. After dinner I went upstairs and packed my bag—for I thought we might have to elope—and put on a new corn color silk with tiny blue forget-me-nots and blue bows. It really was an awfully cunning dress and I thought it might appease Dad's wrath, especially when he'd figured out how many smoke stacks it cost.

I heard the door-bell, but dared not go down. I wasn't sure which man had come. Then I heard distant voices in the library. Dad and someone else were talking. I crept to the top of the stairs noiselessly. Then I heard Dad give one loud roar—not wrath, but laughter. He laughed and laughed, until I thought he'd wake the dead. "You're some boy all right!"—a loud slap on the back,—"to figure it all out. Pretty clever! And say, wasn't it a cinch? Funny I never thought of it." Then he laughed again.

So Mr. Faulkner had solved Dad's problem and Lord Roger had not yet arrived. Trembling with nervousness, I went back to my room. A few minutes later, I heard Dad roaring up at me. Dad always roars when he wants one. He never thinks to send a maid; he isn't educated up to them yet. "Letty, come down here!" The voice sounded angry, so I trembled as I went. Outside the library door I stood a minute and put my hand to my wildly beating heart. I felt as white as a sheet and my lips were dry. Then I spunked up and passed into the room.

Father and Lord Roger stood on the hearth-rug drinking my health. Upon my word they were; but you may not believe it; I scarcely did myself. I stood holding onto the velvet draperies, for I thought I'd faint with the surprise of it.

But Lord Roger saw me and, setting down his glass, had me in his arms in a jiffy. "We can be married in a month, sweetheart," he said, "as soon as I've worked my month's notice in your father's office. Then, hurrah for England!"

"Hurrah!" I said, in scarcely more than a whisper, I was so shocked. "Your name *is* Faulkner, isn't it? Has Dad consented?"

"Just like an onion," Dad replied, which is an expression of his which I can't see means much.

So I'm going to be married next month and my wedding outfit will cost one whole engine, five wheels, a smoke stack and half a boiler. Dad has it all figured out.

Cupid's Goose

BY G. GILBERT

MONSIEUR wishes his suit pressed? He has just time between trains to have it done? He requires that I let him take an old suit while he sits in my shop and I press for him. Well, such things can be done. I have done such things. Really, Monsieur is more than kind. One dollar extra makes the tailors' goose go lightly, is it not so?

"Now Monsieur is comfortable. He has the old trousers, the cigar, the match, the paper from his coat pocket. He will sit still for one half hour and then he shall emerge from the retiring room like a June bride all beautiful to look at. He will catch his train and be not so rumpled up. Is it not so?

"Once another young man sat in the old willow chair where Monsieur sits and I pressed his suit for him, while he wore an old one. Such a romance. What! You think no romance could come into a presser's shop? Listen and you shall hear.

"This Washington brings to me all sorts of strange people, who have the desire to have clothes pressed in a hurry. Some want to attend a White House reception, they say. Some want to look nice after a long journey before they apply for the position their boss has promised them. And some because they must look well on small money, in hopes of getting a better place. Of such was Charles Jacques Le Mans. He was young, he was dark, he was handsome, with his pinky cheeks and bright eyes. His moustache was beautiful, with its curly ends. He had one place at $20 a week in a department. And he wanted another, at $30. So he lives at a big apartment house over Northwest and he has one suit. All his money goes for board and tips, and lodging, and button-hole bouquet. He must make the fine appearance, Monsieur, which is necessary if you are young and handsome, and would rise high in this gay city of George Washington. Charles Le Mans was a French Canada man. He could talk to me with the accent La Belle Francaise. When he first came he had just secured his position. He did not hide from me his $20-a-week poverty, nor its reason. He would rise. He had hopes if he could do one thing well he could make folks forget that he was a naturalized American and that he was poor, and so he would get another place. So he came once a week and sat, as you now sit, while I pressed his one fine suit. That done, he would grasp his cane, tip back his hat and go to his social duties.

"He could dance, he could sing, tra-la-la-la. He could play the ragtime on the piano. He made friends. He progressed until he fixed his eye on the place at $30 a week.

"'If,' said Charles Le Mans to me, 'I can but win one lady's heart she shall pull the wire and I shall have

the place, and we shall be so happy.'

"Romance in a pressing shop? You shall see, Monsieur.

"My Lizette would come in at six o'clock with my supper. She was fifteen years old then—six years ago. She was shy; she went in and out quietly. Often when I looked at Charles Le Mans, I thought: 'Now if she could marry a young man like that. He will progress. When a man will wear one suit and spend all the rest of his money judicially to climb, he will climb.'

"My Lizette was then fair to see. She was small, plump, dark of hair and red of cheek. She would glide in and out without much noise. Charles Le Mans would not look at her much. So matters went for six months. Twice a week Charles Le Mans came to my shop to have his one suit pressed. He wears the old clothes, he tell me of his progress. He tells me of how Miss Smithson, the blonde daughter of the secretary to the third assistant cabinet member is being won. He has her heart laid in siege. It all depends on his one suit and his ability to keep up what he calls 'his end' in his social set. I become interested. My heated tailor's goose becomes an instrument of Cupid. My needle, neatly and quickly discovers weak spots in Charles Le Mans's suit and I perform miracles of darning and mending. Never does the suit seem worn or rumpled. Its fine brown cloth never gets shiny from pressing. I love that suit and Charles Le Mans loves it, because it is part of his romance.

"One night I go home and tell my Lizette all about that suit. She does not seem to listen. But next night she asks me if the suit is still wearing well. I tell her 'yes' and she seems still for a time. Soon I must perform prodigies of skill upon that suit or it will be worn. I invent new grease removers; I polish my goose so it will not take off the nap with new scratches. Charles Le Mans asks me to trust him for pressing, as he has to buy some violets for Miss Smithson. I consent. He is so grateful that I feel like a benefactor. He even smiles on my Lizette when she comes with my supper. I introduce them and they chat a moment. He tells her how beautiful is this Miss Smithson. She tells him she hopes he will win her and his place. He thanks her and shakes her hand. 'How like a lady my Lizette is,' I think. 'She was only a girl yesterday. Here she talks to a man like she knew him months. How strange these *femmes* are.' Is it not so, Monsieur?

"One day Charles Le Mans comes in and tells me he is going to ask that question of Miss Smithson that night. What care did I then bestow on that one suit. My goose was truly then an appliance of Cupid. On its work depended so much for Charles Le Mans, who was almost my compatriot. From my shop would go a man made handsome enough to win his way up and up. If he became a secretary to a chief of bureau, might he not be a Congressman or a Senator? Naturalized citizens may aspire so far. Who knows? What joy I had as I saw him go forth, early in the evening for him, to try his fortune. He twirls his cane. He sets his head back and cocks the hat? *Ma foi!* He was

then a handsome figure of a man.

"Soon comes in my Lizette with my supper. I tell her Charles Le Mans's great day is come. She is very quiet for a time. Then she begins to cry. Since her mother died she had not done so. What would you? I was amazed. She, my bright Lizette, crying? How could it be?

"'I love that Charles Le Mans,' she sobbed. 'I hope he will get the lady he loves and the $30 a week and be happy.'

"What now? My goose has made him handsome to break my Lizette's heart. Romance in a tailor's goose? You shall see, Monsieur. Romance? You shall see.

"My Lizette goes home, after I comfort her. The child is a woman and a sensible woman. How I love her!

"When it comes time to shut up shop, I remain. I cannot go home. Something holds me. About nine of the clock who comes in but Charles Le Mans. He is a changed man. His hat is worn over his eyebrows. His cane no longer twirls. His beautiful suit is rumpled. He falls into the chair distrait.

"I ask him no questions, but soon he begins to speak.

"'I am deceived,' he said. 'She loves another and has taken him and he shall have the beautiful $30 a week. I am ruined.'

"Then he goes out like mad. I am depressed. I fear for him. I go home and tell Lizette and she sobs. I do not scold her. Woman are better crying than laughing with the devil underneath, Monsieur.

"So I see no more of Charles Le Mans for three months. And Lizette at first is mournful, and then more cheerful. I have my work and do not notice her much. I mourn for Charles Le Mans sometimes and miss him when night comes and no one is here to talk with. So I go slyly to his $20 a week office in the department and find that he is working steadily. I find from one there that he is living in a cheap boarding house.

"'This boy has the right manner,' I say. 'Misfortune does not crush him.'

"My Lizette grows more cheerful. I think: 'Fie on thee, fickle girl. He you love mourns for a broken heart and you can laugh with tinkling bells in your voice.' Some women are so, Monsieur, as you may know, but I thought my Lizette was not.

"Then came one night when, to my joy, Charles Le Mans came in. He had on his beautiful suit again.

"'Press me that, as of old, good friend,' he said, 'once more and I shall pay you when my happiness comes.'

"I am so glad to see him that I forget about the $14.50 he owes me and he dresses in the old suit and I press the other which is neither old nor new, but well preserved, by my arts.

"'You have another flame?' I ask him.

"'It is even so, my friend Pollquet,' he says, slyly.

"'Will she get you the fine position?' I ask.

"'The one I will love best,' said he in a low voice. 'It shall place me where I want to be.'

"'Like my Lizette,' thought I, 'he is fickle. The old love forgot so soon,

the new so ardent in his breast.'

"'Soon comes in my Lizette. She is fully sixteen now. She is cherry and plump.

"'Aha, my Charles Le Mans,' I think, 'if you had one like her, now, at the age of eighteen, which she will be in two years, you might rise, because she will make some man work hard to make her happy.'

"Lizette is shy to Charles Le Mans. She greets him shortly, lays down my supper basket and turns to go. I think she is gone and I go on pressing, thinking how the hearts of men and women turn away from right and truth and go in crooked ways, when they might better go in straight ways and be happy. I am so angry that I press the marvelous suit too hard and it scorches. Smoke arises from it. My goose is too hot for the worn cloth of the knees, where the bag comes, as you know, Monsieur. I make a loud snort of anger and hear a queer noise behind me. I turn around quickly, only to find Lizette holding the hand of Charles Le Mans and he is looking into her eyes.

"'The beautiful suit is scorched at the knee, Charles Le Mans,' I cry. 'and what do you here holding my Lizette's hand?'

"Charles Le Mans gets him up. He is handsome by Gar, even in his old clothes, he looks so determined and delighted.

"'I have the honor, Monsieur Pollquet,' he says, 'to ask you for the privilege of visiting your Lizette at her home at proper hours and proper intervals.'

"My Lizette she looks down like a happy little calf. She makes the tears come from her eyes. She looks then at me and blows me a kiss from her pink finger tips. What must I do?

"'Charles Le Mans,' I say, 'my Lizette is too young.'

"'She is as old as her mother was when Monsieur Pollquet first courted her,' says Charles Le Mans.

"'How do you know that?' I ask.

"'I told him that last week when he came to walk with me down to the grocer's in the evening,' said my Lizette, no longer calfish.

"'So,' say I, 'it is this that makes my Lizette to smile and be cheerful?'

"'I care not about the beautiful brown suit,' says Charles Le Mans, 'I have a new gray one. I came tonight for this surprise. Lizette made it up and I came to ask if, in time, she might not be *my* Lizette, as well as yours.'

"Now, Monsieur, what could I do? Such a manner he had. Such a way of progressing. Could anything keep this man down, I asked? No, indeed. Could my Lizette be better off than as his Lizette, when she came to the proper age? Might it not be better that she settle her fate early than wait and make a poorer choice? Who knows. I may die and leave her alone. So many things may happen.

"Monsieur's suit is done. He is creaseless once more. He can go to his train with the peace of mind that comes to one who has been to a discriminating tailor. As he passes up the street he will see a stationer's shop, with the elegant brass post card rack in front. He will read the sign, 'Charles Le Mans, Novelties.' He will see that Charles Le Mans is rising. This government could not hold him

in its service. He will not see Lizette, my Lizette and Charles's Lizette.

"No, Monsieur, it is not their first child. The twins first, now this other little Lizette. So has love been blessed. They want me to put up my old goose and live with them and help in the store, but no, no! Soon I shall have enough saved in little bonds to make me have one dollar a day income. Then I shall go to live with them, but as a self-supporting old man.

"Good bye, Monsieur. If you come to Washington again, come to see me and if need be, I shall press your suit with Cupid's goose."

The Eyes of Conscience

BY ROY TURNBULL

FRANKLIN CRAIG had been waiting for this chance all the morning. Mr. Bettersworth, his miserly employer, wealthy owner of the fashionable Art and Curio shop, had just stepped to the warehouse some blocks distant. Yokokita, the Japanese lad of all work, stood lazily talking with the proprietor of the book store adjoining. Stealthily, the Art Shop clerk walked across the store, filled with treasures in pottery and metal, silk and ebony, to Bettersworth's private antique safe which stood under the cash register. He paused with hand suspended above the combination, the secret of which he had long since surreptitiously acquired. Through the cavelike entrance to the darkened store he could see the living sunshine dancing in the cobbled street.

A gusty breeze swept in, stirring up the wierd mixture of smells lurking in the many objects culled from all parts of the globe. His hesitation was brief, for the contrast between the inviting sunshine, with its promise of other lands, and the monotony of the "junk" shop, as he termed it, wherein he had slaved for so long, quickly overcame his scruples.

In a moment he was down on one knee and a little later the safe door stood open before him. His eager hand readily found the thin flat packet of bills that his employer had drawn from the bank early that morning in order to pay for an expected cloisonne treasure from the Orient. Bettersworth's dealings, owing to the diverse methods of the many nationalities trading with him, were always in cash. Ripping off the covering, Craig stuffed the bank notes into his coat pocket. Hot and cold waves coursed through his pulsing veins as his hand closed over the coveted money. His traveling bag had long since been packed against this emergency. A few days of travel and the name of Franklin Craig would be but a memory.

Then slowly, but overwhelmingly, and with a spasmodic contraction of his stomach muscles, he sensed another presence in the darkened store. Instinct, with its indefinable, yet disconcerting force, apprized him of scrutinizing eyes. Turning his head with a painful jerk, he beheld a tall man in a frock coat and an old-fashioned beaver hat, standing on the other side of the low counter, watching him. Craig, the blood rushing away from his blanching face, rose slowly to his feet and shrank back involuntarily, a damning picture of guilt. The strange old man who had so silently entered the store must have witnessed the act of theft and seen him feverishly stuff the ill-gotten money in his pocket.

The intruder stared inscrutably at Craig, a look of world weariness and sadness on his wrinkled face. His lips moved slowly as if he were counting the inexorable moments of time, or

muttering unsavory words of condemnation. Craig, with purpose and emotion inchoate, stepped forward, his gaze wildly falling on a bronze shield whereon hung an Arabian scimiter, but the old man shook his head austerely from side to side, and turning on his rubber heel, walked forth from the emporium of historical trinkets into the bright sunlight.

Craig fell back against the safe, his tortured brain racing in kaleidoscopic confusion. Then summoning every ounce of will power, he rushed from the store, but the old man of the beaver hat had vanished. Yokokita, his back to Craig, still held forth idly with the proprietor of the bookstore.

With fear tugging at his entrails, Craig struggled in the upheaval of his mind until it seemed he must collapse. As he saw the fat, dumpy figure of his employer emerge from around the corner of the block, he uttered a sharp ejaculation of terror.

The thought came with a rush—to get the money back into the safe—but no, it was too late! Yokokita had already entered the store and was busily engaged dusting a Louis XIV. chest of drawers. Turning desperately in pursuance of a rapidly forming plan, Craig quietly went to the safe and locked it with a turn of the handle. Tearing a bill from the packet in his pocket he thrust it into one of Yokokita's street shoes standing in the corner, always discarded in the morning for sandals. Spying the familiar "Studies in English," which Yokokita had been perusing for weeks, Craig had a stroke of inspiration. He opened the cover of the book and inserted between the leaves a crumpled bit of paper he had fished from his pocket and on which appeared rude numerals.

Craig then hurried out into the little yard where he immediately buried the packet of money in a far corner and whistling merrily busied himself with huge packing cases.

His heart beat wildly as he waited for the explosion. It came with the door flung open and Bettersworth apoplectic on the step.

"Come in here!" he cried. Craig, simulating wonderment, obeyed.

His employer pointed grimly to the antique strong box, the door now standing open.

"I put it in there this morning! There isn't a chance of a mistake! Now it's gone!"

"What, sir?" inquired Craig mildly.

"Money! Money, you idiot! Nearly five thousand dollars! Where have you been?"

This question came like a shot, but Craig was equal to the emergency.

"Unpacking the plasters, in the yard," he responded quickly. "If I had known you had forgotten to lock the safe door, I—I—" he paused, visibly embarrassed, as he glanced over at the gaping Yokokita who understood but little of this wild enactment before him.

"You'd, you'd what?" demanded Bettersworth.

"Why, I wouldn't have gone out in the yard and closed the door behind me." blurted Craig, flushing and endeavoring nobly to shield Yokokita. "I thought Yokokita was in the store all the time."

Yokokita, instinctively catching something of the danger in the air, sputtered in imperfect English.

In a moment, Bettersworth was at the telephone calling the police. Later, when special officers discovered the crumpled ten dollar bill in the Japanese servant's shoe, the boy from Nippon nearly fainted and when, to top it off, they investigated his pockets and clothing and finally discovered the sheet of paper between the leaves of the "Studies in English," which Bettersworth immediately recognized as the numeral notation of the combination to his safe, poor Yokokita raved incoherently while Craig solicitously sympathized with him.

A few weeks later, in the courtroom, drowsy and humming with the murmur of voices, Craig watched the jury retire. Hope and triumph rose in his breast, for the bonds of guilt had securely fastened about the hapless Japanese boy.

The suspicion that in the regular course of investigation had included Craig now completely lifted from him. Bettersworth, seemingly ready to burst with the suppression of his spleen, sat next to his lawyer waiting impatiently for the verdict which, though it could not return his money, would at least prove that justice prevailed in the punishment of the thief. Yokokita, sullen and hopeless in this jargon of animosity about him, sat with eyes on the floor. Craig swept the audience and smiled condescendingly.

Yet, would the door of the jury room never open! Yokokita must be found guilty. This must close the case against further investigation.

At last the suspense was over; the judge paused in his conversation with the clerk, to read the verdict which affirmed the guilt of Yokokita. Craig, by this time a master of dissimulation, concealed his elation. After all, what did it matter if a miserable, solitary Jap like Yokokita—who had never had anything anyhow!—were to spend a few years in the penitentiary? Surely his own hopes, reputation and future, were of infinitely greater importance. He would resign his position in due time, dig out the hidden packet and be off for other climes. The blood began to flow more normally through his veins. Mopping his brow, he breathed with an acute sense of relief, and turned to leave the courtroom. As he did so, an icy hand clutched his heart and the room seemed to spin round crazily. The thing that he had feared subconsciously, had, in fact, been his obsession all through the days and nights of agony since the hour of his theft, had come to pass. The memory of that strange, mysterious, phantasy-like witness, the old man with the beaver hat, had been with him every hour. *There*, not ten feet away, just behind the railing, sat the wierd old man himself!

Craig uttered a startled cry and sank limply into the chair he had just vacated. Bettersworth turned on him.

"What is it now?" he demanded.

The guilty clerk, with protruding eyeballs, gazed into the eyes of his conscience—the fateful witness. Under the uncompromising stare of his silent accuser, Craig's spirit crumbled like sand. Two officers were already leading Yokokita toward the hold-over. The old man near the rail gathered his hat and pad of paper under his arm, preparing to rise, presumably to address the judge.

Craig's nerves gave way beneath the impending exposure, and he jumped to his feet. In a piercing, hysterical voice, his words tumbling over one another, he poured forth his confession to the startled court. The astounded judge ordered him into custody.

Under the fearful touch of the law, Craig sank in a huddle. Dazed and motionless he heard the methodical, technical reopening of the case. The tense, full silence of the room beat in upon him like muffled hammers.

Dumbly, he was dragged toward the shining bars of the hold-over where Yokokita stood with mouth open. On the way, they passed the old man of the beaver hat. He was writing on the pad of paper, supported by his flat-top hat.

"Good morning, Mr. Donaldson," offered one of the officers at Craig's side. The old man of the beaver hat gravely bowed his head to the salutation, and Craig cringed before the austerity of his noble face.

"Brian Donaldson, the novelist," explained the officer to his companion on Craig's left. "He's blind as a bat, but he goes poking around everywhere —pawnshops, and bookstores, and police-courts. Always alone—never seems to lose his way."

Then the two officers of the court turned to their charge in dismay, for he had collapsed to unconsciousness in their rough grasp.

Before Twelve

BY CLARENCE V. KELTY

THE day nurse paused beside her relief to say good-night.

"There's nothing one can do except deaden their pain. They're simply waiting; not a man in this ward has a chance to live. There's enough 'dope' in those two glasses on the table to last till morning. That glass setting on the paper is deadly in its present strength. Dilute it in the proportions shown on the paper after you've used what's in the other glass.

"That man by the window is out of his head. You'll have to give him a 'shot' frequently to quiet him. For some reason he wants to die before twelve to-night."

Left alone, the night nurse crossed to the bed by the window. Seating herself on a camp chair, she fell to studying the young face turned toward her. The man's eyes opened suddenly and held her own.

"What's today?" he asked drowsily.

"June third."

"It isn't midnight yet?"

"No—scarcely eight o'clock."

"Four hours— Listen! I've got to go before twelve." His eyes were unnaturally bright, his cheeks deeply flushed above their growth of beard.

Her fingers closed with a cool touch on his big wrist.

"No! I heard what she told you a while back, but I'm not out of my head now." His hand closed tightly around hers, and, like a good nurse, she left it there.

"I can't live. I'm shot all to—hell! If I die before twelve there's a girl in England who gets my insurance—a thousand pounds. I've got no one else in the world. It's all I can do for her—just to die before twelve. My policy expires at midnight and—she's going to need that money. All you've got to do is give me a 'shot' so that I'll go to sleep—for good."

The nurse's slender body straightened with a jerk. "Boy, boy! what are you saying? That's—murder!" There was fear in her wide gray eyes.

"No, it's—" A low moan from across the room interrupted him.

He watched the nurse cross to the sound. She slipped a soft round arm under the shell-torn shoulders of a Ghurka, raised him gently and held a glass of water to his lips. Then, from the table, she took a hypodermic needle, filled it, and returned to the Ghurka's bed.

When she came back to the man who watched, he saw that her red lips were trembling.

"It's new to you—so much suffering, isn't it?"

"Yes, I'm only a beginner. I want to help all I can, but—oh! there's nothing one can do for a man like that!"

"There's something you can do for me—more good than you've ever done, perhaps. See how easy it would be. Give me a 'shot' like you gave him,

VOLUME TIGHTLY BOUND

only take it from the other glass."

"I can't! I can't do that. Good God! think of it! That would be the easiest way so often. If one began that where would it end?"

"I'm not asking it for myself, but for a girl—a girl who's going to need that money. It would be so easy; no one would ever know."

"I'd know. I'd think of it always!" she whispered.

"You would bless yourself always for doing it. Here! There's a letter under my pillow. Read it and you'll understand."

The nurse read the letter through, then looked at him. "She—she is your—"

"No," he answered slowly, "she would have been when I went back; she never will be now."

The nurse put her hands on the edge of the bed and laid her face against them.

"She's only a girl," he said softly. "Her eyes are blue and warm like these French skies at noon, and her hair is all full of sun dust, like yours. It's all I can do for her; it will help make up for the thing I can't do now."

There was a sound of movement in the room and the nurse raised her head quicky. A doctor was making his round of the wards. The girl left her place by the bed and went as far as the table to meet him.

"He's conscious now," she whispered, nodding toward the bed.

"His vitality is wonderful, but he hasn't a chance," answered the doctor in a low voice.

He crossed to the bed and nodded cheerfully to its occupant. "How's the pain?" he asked. "Pretty bad?"

The wounded man did not answer. He was looking beyond the doctor at the nurse standing beside the table.

"We can ease you along with a 'hypo' now and then if it gets too bad," the doctor continued.

The man on the bed slowly shifted his eyes. "The pain? Yes, it's getting to be—hell," he said wearily.

The doctor crossed to the nurse. She stood with one hand resting on the table, her eyes watching the man on the bed. Taking up a hypodermic needle, the doctor bent over the two glasses.

"From which have you been using?" he asked.

The nurse started slightly, then glanced down. "*Not* the one on the paper—the other," she said slowly.

He filled the needle and went back to the bed. When he joined the nurse a moment later, she stood by an open window looking into the star-dusted night.

"That will quiet him for a few hours. I'll be in again at midnight."

She nodded but did not speak, and the doctor went on to the next ward.

Presently the nurse left the window and crossed to the man's bed. She bent down, looking intently at the quiet face. Seating herself she rested her fingers on the big wrist and waited.

An hour passed. The girl stood up and crossed slowly to the table. With steady hands she slipped the paper from beneath one glass and placed it under the other. She glanced at her watch on the table.

"Before twelve," she breathed. Then, "I *will* bless myself always for doing it."

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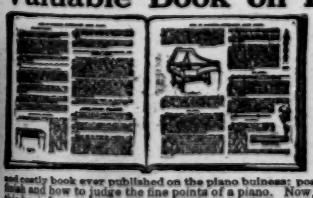

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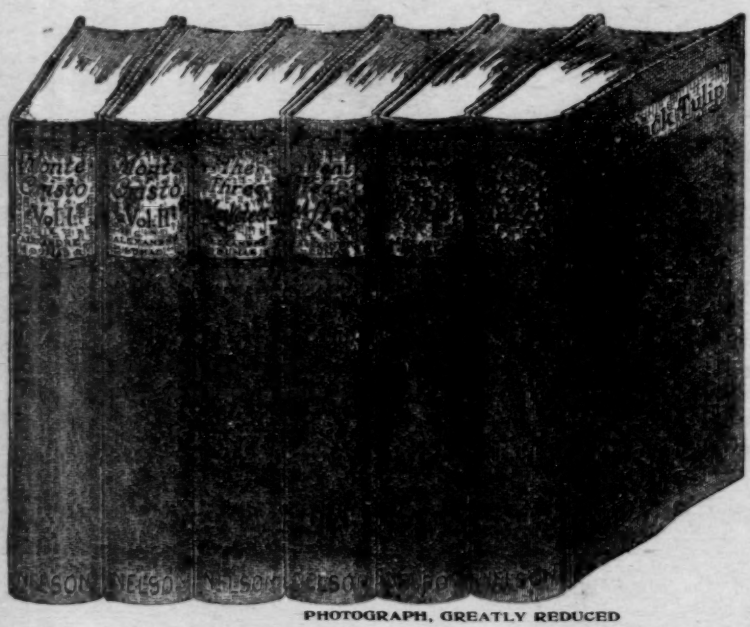

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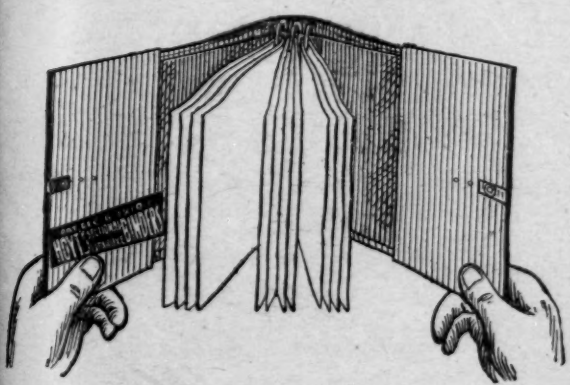

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